SOCIAL JUSTICE IRELAND

working to build a just society

Towards Wellbeing for All

Towards Wellbeing for All

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INTRODUCTION

The success or failure of an economy is traditionally measured in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which calculates the value of all goods and services produced by a country or Gross National Product (GNP) which measure how much of that value remains in the country. However, neither of these measures take into account the impact on or the damage that may be caused to people or place in the production of those goods and services. They may also give a false impression of the strength or weakness of an economy. Because of the distorting effect large corporations can have on Ireland's finances, a new measure was developed, GNI* which seeks to provide a more accurate measurement of what is really happening at the core of the economy. In Ireland also, we have a new measure introduced in Budget 2023, GGB*. Acknowledging the State's reliance on corporation tax, this metric will be used to monitor the public finances while excluding any 'excess' receipts.

But what does any of this mean for the health and happiness of individuals? How do we measure the success or failure of a society? The response to that question that has emerged across the world over the last few decades is to measure the impacts of policy against the wellbeing of citizens. But what exactly does that mean and how is it best done?

The Programme for Government 2020[1] commitment to the development of a well-being framework has been delivered on with the Second Report on Ireland's Well-being Framework published in June 2022. As part of that commitment, a Well-being Information Hub was developed and maintained by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). This "reports on the Well-being of the nation and attempts to answer this essential question – how we are doing as a country, as communities and as individuals".[2]

The information hub gathers data on:

- Subjective Wellbeing – rating overall life satisfaction, feelings of depression, happy with life.

[1] https://assets.gov.ie/130911/fe93e24e-dfe0-40ff-9934-def2b44b7b52.pdf
[2] https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-wbhub/well-beinginformationhub/

- Mental and Physical Health – Healthy life years, unmet medical needs, population with depression.
- Income and Wealth – Median household net wealth, difficulty making ends meet, household disposable income.
- Knowledge, Skills and Innovation – Reading and maths levels at 15, lifelong learning, research and development personnel.
- Housing and Built Environment – New dwelling completions, domestic dwelling energy ratings, average distances to everyday services, at risk of poverty rate after rent and mortgage interest.
- Environment, Climate and Biodiversity – Pollution and grime, clean water, greenhouse gas emissions, waste to landfill.
- Safety and Security – murder rate per 100,000, persons killed or injured on roads, number who worry they could be a victim of crime.
- Work and job quality – Labour underutilisation rate, employment rate, mean weekly earnings.
- Time use – Long working hours in main job, number satisfied with use of time, carers providing at least 20 hours of care per week.
- Connections, community and participation – population who feel lonely, population with at least 2 people they are close enough to count on if they had a serious problem.
- Civic engagement, trust and cultural expression – population who experienced discrimination in 2 years previous, satisfaction with how democracy works in Ireland, perceived social inclusion.

These are the things Ireland has chosen to measure and as the saying goes, what matters is measured and if it is not measured, it does not matter. Measurement also implies a further commitment to dealing with the findings.

So how are we doing? In a country that still is unable to provide secure affordable housing, timely access to healthcare, support children with extra educational needs and has almost 595,000 people living in poverty, we have a lot of work to do.

The papers gathered here all reflect on wellbeing initiatives internationally and nationally and make suggestions for new initiatives or propose improvements to existing methods. Ultimately, as a nation, we want to be well, safe and fulfilled and we want to ensure that so are the generations to come.

These papers were originally presented at a conference organised by *Social Justice Ireland* on the theme: Towards Wellbeing for All.

Social Justice Ireland expresses its deep gratitude to the authors of the various chapters that follow. We wish to thank them as they have made this publication possible. They brought a great deal of experience, research, knowledge and wisdom to their task and contributed their time and obvious talent to preparing these chapters.

This work is partly supported by the SSNO funding scheme of the Department of Rural and Community Development and Pobal. A special 'thank you' to them.

Social Justice Ireland advances the lives of people and communities through providing independent social analysis and effective policy development to create a sustainable future for every member of society and for societies as a whole. We work to build a just society through developing and delivering credible analysis and policy to improve society and the lives of people. We identify sustainable options for the future and outline viable pathways forward. In all of this we focus on human rights and the common good. This publication is a contribution to this process.

In presenting these chapters *we* do not attempt to cover all question that arise around this topic. This volume is offered as a contribution to the ongoing public debate around these and related issues. We trust that those engaged in shaping Ireland's future for the coming decades will find it of value.

Brigid Reynolds
Seán Healy
Susanne Rogers

Towards Wellbeing for All

Social Justice Ireland

1. The Finnish social security system and innovations paving the way towards a just and equal society

Raili Lahnalampi

President Martti Ahtisaari, the Nobel Laureate for Peace, who worked in the Northern Ireland Peace process, has said: "The Nordic model has not come about in a vacuum, but has required a lot of hard work and sincere commitment – both from political leaders and the citizens. The challenge is not only how to create wealth, but also how we use it. Even though the interdependency in today's world is a fact, the main responsibility for creating egalitarian policies lies with the nation states."[1]

Social security systems have in most cases their roots in the economic and social history of their respective countries. The basic idea of the Finnish model – or more generally the Nordic model - is to pursue universal welfare state policies, which means that public programmes, services and social transfers are designed to serve everyone living in Finland.

In building the base for social safety nets, Finland used its social security funds to build up industrial infrastructure and promoted economic growth and combined gender equality with high levels of labour force participation. A conscious decision was to make social investments in children to promote human capital accumulation and boost intergenerational mobility. This was important to ensure an economically and socially sustainable society.

The Finnish welfare system now faces new challenges. How to ensure the financing of the services as age dependency ratio increases, how to prevent social exclusion and how to address the needs of minorities. Major social and health reforms are under way while at the same time we face enormous challenges including climate change, geopolitical competition and a war in Europe.

Finland and Ireland are both open export-driven prosperous democracies. Finland is physically five times bigger than Ireland and has about the same size of

[1] https://researchportal.helsinki.fi/en/publications/a-recipe-for-a-better-life-experiences-from-the-nordic-countries

population as Ireland. Ireland is a "young" nation (median age 38) while Finland is already "greying". We share an urban – rural divide and the challenge to offer social services in all parts of the country also into the future. In this article, heavily based on two professional literature sources[2] for which I am grateful, I will discuss some of the key principles and practices that we in Finland have introduced in building a society based on egalitarian principles. I believe it is important to share lessons learnt, when we face increasingly complex challenges in providing social safety nets for our people. There is no "one size fits all" - model and comparing social security systems has proven difficult, but learning from each other's experiences can be inspiring and of mutual benefit.[3]

My own story is part of the Finnish social evolution

The story of the Finnish welfare system is part of my own story. I was born in the 50s as the youngest child of nine to a farming family in a small rural village on the west coast of Finland. My father had a basic education and an enduring experience of almost five years in the war against the Soviet Union. My mother – quite exceptionally at the time - had obtained a vocation as professional milk-maid.

Our farm was small and all children worked in the fields and at home. The municipality provided the basic public health and social services to support us. I remember very well, when the community nurse came to our home to make the routine check-ups and give us the "frightening" vaccinations. It is very clear that without the maternity grants, free education, free school meals and basic health services, it would not have been possible for us children to gain an education and meaningful occupations. I was the first and only one to go to the university and get a degree.

Early assets and corner stones for the Finnish social development

Finland was a very poor country 100 years ago, but it had some characteristics that helped build a society that is now known as a Nordic welfare state.[4] These

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[2] https://researchportal.helsinki.fi/en/publications/recipe-for-better-life-experiences-from-nordic-countries *and* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322538566_Hyvinvointivaltio_ylittaa_jalkensa

[3] https://sosiaalivakuutus.fi/mista-mittarit-sosiaaliturvan-kauneuskilpailuun-%E2%80%92-ken-on-maista-parhain-sosiaaliturvassa/

[4] https://docslib.org/doc/11785551/how-finland-became-finland

features were the early pillars, which laid the ground to build a well-functioning democracy. The main characteristics have been categorised as follows.

Local communities were isolated and early on had to take responsibility on basic services, including education. Education was initially made available through the so called "roving countryside schools". My mother attended such a school and I remember, how in matters such as mathematics and culture, she had an amazingly wide knowledge of the issues. Reading and writing became widespread. One motivation for this was that these skills were a requirement for marriage.

Finland was part of Sweden for almost 700 years (until 1806) and that shared Nordic history has had a significant impact on our legal system, respect for the rule of law and trust in authorities and civil service. Corruption has never taken roots in Finland. Today Finland ranks among the least corrupt countries in the world.[5]

One and perhaps the most long-lasting achievement was, that by 1906 both women and men gained full political rights. Women not only voted but stood as candidates for elections. This resulted in 19 influential women being elected to the first Parliament 1907-08, including Miina Sillanpää, who became the first female minister in 1920s. Sillanpää is the symbol of progressive women, who made a permanent difference for equal treatment of women. She proposed several legislative initiatives during her time in the Parliament. She understood the value of making concrete steps of advancement and founded the first "First Home" shelter for single mothers.

In rural Finland, women's contribution and responsibility in work life had always been equal to men's as far as farm work was considered. This was the case also in our home. During the wars against the Soviet Union (1939-45) women took charge of many industrial positions and ran the economy, while men were at war. That paved the way to the more general understanding of women's role in society.

Women's role in working life and politics from early on was fundamental in defining Finnish society and its social security system. Women worked within the parties, women only parties never really took off in Finland - neither did gender quotas. Working "from within" has not always been easy but resulted in long-lasting reforms. It has also encouraged men to work for equality and made

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5 https://www.transparency.org/

them see the important role women play in developing an equalitarian welfare society.

The strong democratic tradition helped Finland overcome the bloody civil war (1917-18) and the country was able to come together after the war. Multi-party coalitions resulted in consensus-oriented politics After the civil war (1918) and wars against the Soviet Union (1939-1945), it was widely understood that poverty and inequality needed to be tackled to ensure stability. One driving force for the strong support for social safety nets was that the civil war was partly linked to social and economic inequality in the society.

Hence, provision of equal opportunity became a key objective. Creating an extensive system of child health clinics in 1920s proved to be crucial investment in wellbeing. Uniting the nation was important. Compulsory education and universal army conscription meant that people with different social status shared same classrooms and barracks and that helped to integrate the society.

From early on in the development of the society, basic values and human rights such as freedom of speech and gender equality were cornerstones for the later welfare society. Free education, childcare and healthcare were set up. The first steps toward social safety nets were established.

In retrospect, one can see that most elements of the early developments were closely linked. Education, reliable institutions, dedicated public service paved way to innovative export industries. They lead to resilient market economy and jobs, building the base for tax revenues to pay for improved and universal public services. This has later on developed to an overall “whole-of–society” approach in many Finnish policies and practices.

From social security to a welfare policy

The history of Finland shows that social cohesion in a politically divided country is possible and that the role of social safety nets played an important part in it.

Political integration started early. The civil war was won by the “whites”, but the Social Democrats – that had represented the “reds” - could participate in the first post-war elections 1919 and in 1926 they formed a minority government. After the wars against Soviet Union in 1945 the “Spirit of the Winter War” helped to further unite the nation. Finland had to pay reprisals and resettle over 400,000 evacuees (11% of the population) from the areas that the Soviet Union took as war reprisal. The nation worked as one in this effort.

This social integration process was helped by expanding the social policies, implementing extensive land reforms and modernising the education system. Insurance funds as investment capital played a crucial role in modernising the country.[6] The national (people's) pension scheme (kansaneläke) was established in 1937. In a capital-poor country, the state deliberately used the new pension system to accumulate capital for investments. The funds were used to electrification, building roads and other basic infrastructure for industrial development. Later, the employment-related pension funds that began to accumulate in the early 1960s facilitated industrialisation and promoted economic growth, which in turn enabled the expansion of social policies.

The people's school (kansakoulu) was crucial not only as an educational institution but in equalizing the society. A great invention was the universal child benefit allowance set up in 1948 and two years after over a million children benefitted from the programme. The allowance was paid to the mother and for many women that meant the first "money of their own". That gave them certain independence and helped embed gender equality.

Basic structures of the present Finnish social security system

Finland enjoys one of the most advanced and comprehensive welfare systems in the world, designed to guarantee dignity and decent living conditions for all. Although the development of social security started already in the 1930s, the basic structures of the present Finnish social security system were built within a generation – or about in 30 years - starting from the 1960s during the industrialisation of the Finnish economy.[7]

The Finnish social security system reflects the traditional Nordic belief that the state can intervene benevolently on citizens' behalf.[8] Core to the system are social insurance (i.e. pensions, sickness and unemployment benefits, workers' compensation), welfare (i.e. family aid, child-care services, services for the disabled) and a comprehensive public health system.

Finnish social security is divided into residence-based social security support (i.e. family allowances, student financial aid, maternity allowance, sickness allowance, child care subsidies) and employment-based social security (i.e.

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6 https://researchportal.helsinki.fi/en/publications/recipe-for-better-life-experiences-from-nordic-countries

7 https://www.julkari.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/129153/Suomalainen sosiaaliturva 2006.pdf?sequence=5

8 https://www.expat-finland.com/living_in_finland/social_security.html

unemployment allowance, retirement and old-age pensions, accident insurance and security against disability and illnesses, earnings-related).[9]

Residence-based social security is financed by tax and it is administered by Kela (the Social Insurance Institution of Finland).[10] Earnings-based social security is financed by contributions to private pension companies and social security funds, and it is administered by the Finnish Centre for Pensions (Eläketurvakeskus). Eligibility for most social security is based on having a permanent residence, and the benefits can in principle be claimed only by those who live in Finland.[11]

The challenges and limits of the welfare society

The society and people's demands are not the same as they were when the original welfare framework was built, so it is important to discuss the present challenges to the welfare system. The way people perceive the role of the state is changing. But perhaps the major factors that affect the system, and its sustainability, are global. Globalisation, digitalisation, technological transition and climate change, all place complex demands and limits on nation states and on how they should and can function. Luckily, the European Social Survey[12], that monitors the trends in welfare attitudes, show that the overall support to income distribution in the EU is still strong.

The five principles of the Finnish and in more general of the Nordic model have been categorised as follows: social productivity; equality and equity; universalism; public responsibility and solidarity. Considering these principles in a critical way the authors of Hyvinvointivaltio ylittää jälkensä" (The welfare state crosses its borders)[13] have discussed the strengths and weaknesses as well as the limits of the Finnish welfare system. I believe the book raises some important questions and viewpoints about the system, and I will sum up the main findings and add some other comments below.

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9 https://www.kela.fi/social-security-in-finland
10 https://www.infofinland.fi/fi/settling-in-finland/finnish-social-security
11 https://stm.fi/suomen-sosiaaliturvajarjestelma
12 Europeansocialsurvey.org
13 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322538566_Hyvinvointivaltio_ylittaa_jalkensa

The tenets of the Finnish welfare model[14]

Social productivity discourse looks at the nature of the investment in terms of whether it is a productive investment for the society or only a cost for the private sector. A key issue is the financing, how the revenue is collected and what are its limits. Traditionally, in a market economy, necessary economic growth and employment rates are seen as *sine qua non* for the revenue base. In order to safeguard the welfare state in the future the state needs to ensure a production base through technological innovation and investments in education. Recently, it is acknowledged that we need to take into account also the ecological limits of the planet. The main argument for public social services is that a well-functioning and prosperous economy needs healthy and prosperous people.

Equality – equity: The Finnish welfare system is based on the equal treatment of people and the pursuit of economic equity. Our conviction is that widespread inequality will, on the long run, be negative for everyone's wellbeing as well as to the society as a whole.

The goal of equality, most notably between rich and poor and between men and women, is the key to egalitarian thinking. The Finnish welfare state model has helped women to enter into the labour market and it appears to have lowered the income differentials between women and men. There is of course still a lot to do to achieve equal gender relations inter alia, pay and occupational segregation of jobs.

It is argued that the equalitarian welfare state diminishes the motivation to work and that redistribution is an obstacle to economic growth. Empirical findings seem to suggest the opposite.[15] Finland experienced a deep economic recession in the early 1990s. This forced the Finnish government to make difficult welfare cuts in order to reduce social spending and avoid further increase in public debt. The crisis showed that the system was able to absorb macro-economic shocks and stabilise living conditions when needed. The model showed its ability to transform itself in a socially justifiable way.

Also in the equity discourse, the ecological aspect is prominent. It argues that a new concept of sustainable wellbeing - and green growth - is necessary in order to prevent an ecological catastrophe.

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[14] Ibid

[15] https://researchportal.helsinki.fi/en/publications/recipe-for-better-life-experiences-from-nordic-countries

Universalism: It argued that when welfare support and payments are universal that may necessarily limit the use of more targeted measures to cater for people or different regions or groups. That may make the system too rigid and not flexible enough to accommodate changes. It may also hinder competition and division of labour. Since societal data is essential in running the modern economies the role and ownership of data is part of the discussion related to universalism.

Public responsibility: The key to the Finnish welfare model is that the public sector carries the responsibility to provide for welfare. The role of the state can be seen as too little or too much. The main criticism – similar to the issue of equity above - has been that public interventions (may) make people passive. As an alternative, charity or private schemes have been suggested. In Finland one recent phenomena, that can be seen as a contradiction to public responsibility, are "food banks", centers where people can collect free food. They are operated by charities, but on some occasions supported by the state. A new phenomena are the "Zero Waste" food banks that could be seen as part of sustainable wellbeing.

Solidarity: The Finnish model aims for cooperative approaches and collective agreements and tries to regulate and limit the exploitation of individuals and their basic needs. The role of social partners has been crucial for constructing the model. Employer federations and trade unions have played an important role not only in establishing collective bargaining systems, but also many legislative structures. To sustain solidarity amongst the people during times of transformations, the model needs to reconcile risks and uncertainties of the market economy and to cope with changing circumstance.

Social investments in children – a key to the Finnish model

The services for families with children are said to be the key to the welfare model, so it is important to discuss it in more detail.

Direct income transfers to families with children are extensive. The aim is to value and appreciate fully the potential of each individual to the society. Health care benefits for pregnant mothers has been self-evident for a long time. The innovative maternity package (see Box 1) has been made available to all mothers for over 70 years.[16] Services are provided on a universal basis and free of charge. Special services are available for high-risk groups. The model is a 'dual-earner' model facilitated by changes in the tax system. Single parents have special supports. Finland relies heavily on public day care arrangements. The primary

[16] https://www.kela.fi/maternitypackage

caregiver is a professional either in a daycare centre or in family care that operates under the public early childhood education and care system.[17]

Since 2005 the Ombudsman for Children, an autonomous and independent authority, promotes the realisation of the rights and best interest of children. The Ombudsman ensures that the position and rights of children are taken into account in legislation and decision-making. The Ombudsman has the power to investigate, criticise and publicise matters important to improving the welfare of children and youth.

[17] https://www.kela.fi/lastenhoidon-tuet

Box 1 - Maternity Package – Äitiyspakkaus

The first maternity grants were provided in 1938 intended for low-income mothers only. In 1949, the maternity grant was made available to all mothers in Finland. The introduction of maternity grants was prompted by concerns over declining birth rates and high infant mortality. The key element of the system was to provide the mothers access to public health services, so the grant and package are enablers for a larger scheme. A prerequisite for receiving the maternity grant is that the mother must visit a doctor or a maternity and child health clinic for a health check before the 4th month of pregnancy. In practice, this means a health check that you have before the end of week 18. This innovation was a turning point in improving the health of mothers and babies.

Nearly all first-time mothers now choose the maternity package. Only a third of all expecting mothers opt for the cash benefit (at present €170.) For several years now, the fabrics included in the maternity package have been in neutral colours, making them suitable for both girls and boys. The maternity package (56 useful items for the child and the mother) changes every year while staying true that its roots. The idea of giving a set of same clothes for all stresses the principle of all babies are born equal.

Over the years, it has become increasingly environmentally friendly. Many countries have piloted the innovation and Scotland introduced "a baby box" in 2017.

Education

The Finnish education system is considered exemplary and ranks high in many surveys. Universal access to education was a fundamental goal from the start of the nation-building and now the aim is to ensure equal opportunity to fully mobilise all available human resources, to boost innovation and economic development.[18] This means, for example, no book no expenses before upper secondary school, secondary and upper secondary education is free, no tuition for universities, a universal support system for students, which covers an important part of the living expenses. The state guarantees study loans, which allows students irrespective of family background to finance their studies. Tertiary education, life-long learning and active labour market policies are

[18] https://okm.fi/en/education-system

part of the education system. The high-class teacher training is a key element. Challenges remain and lately issues related to access to third level education and segregation have emerged.

One great Finnish innovation related to equal education system is the free school meals (see Box 2) and Finland is now leading a coalition to introduce this system as a way to improve food security in developing nations.[19]

Box 2 - Free school meals - kouluruoka[20]

School meals are an investment in equality and the future. They build equality between children from different backgrounds, strengthening equal opportunity.

Finland was the first country in the world to serve free school meals and the system was originally introduced in the 1920s, but free school meals began in the 1940s. Today high-quality free school meals are provided to all students aged six to eighteen. The "raison d'être" is that well-balanced meals improve students' health and wellbeing which, in turn, improves their learning potential and outcomes. It is one of the elements that contribute to the success of Finland's education system.

Nutritional school meals are a part of every student's education in Finland. They act as a holistic pedagogical practice to teach children about nutrition, good eating habits, international food cultures, as well as the environmental impact of food. School lunch break routines cover many objectives from the Finnish curriculum implementation and developing transversal competencies like everyday life skills, participation, active citizenship, and building a sustainable future.

[19] https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/toward-school-meals-to-all
[20] https://toolbox.finland.fi/

Figure 1

Photo: Keski-Suomen museo, Pänkänen Antti

Looking ahead

The most important feature of the Finnish welfare state is considered its universalism. High quality childcare and school services have provided equal possibilities for all children. Universal access to healthcare is essential for the population's health and wellbeing. Childcare enables both genders to participate equally in paid labour and parenthood. Public services have been important for gender equality in Finland.

The Finnish welfare system is not the same as it was during its "golden years" of the 1980s.[21] Especially after a deep recession of the1990s and during the following years, cuts were made and conditions added. The privatisation of public services has taken place in order to improve choice and efficiency. According to Hiilamo and others[22]: the Nordic welfare model is still distinct and fares well in comparison with other welfare state models on most dimensions of welfare.

The main challenge is to ensure sustained financing of the services. The proportion of older people and the resulting demand for social and health services is increasing, while the number of people in the labour market is decreasing. Given the relatively low birth rate it is estimated that we will need about half a million immigrants in Finland by 2060. To mitigate the situation a major wellbeing services reform has been agreed upon in order to make the system more efficient.[23] The implementation is due to start January 2023.

One of the key assets of the Finnish society is the high level of trust in institutions and fellow people. This has played a crucial role in developing the social security system. At the core of universalism is a sense of commonality and that is built on trust. It provides for the legitimacy of the public institutions and the redistribution of income.

In order to ensure that we can sustain the welfare state, taxpayers need to have confidence in the system. Fortunately, the system itself builds trust, because everybody enjoys some benefits of the system at some stage of their life.

If the welfare services are perceived as unfair, too generous or seen as financed by growing tax burden or bigger public debt, the trust in the system may weaken. The media and factual public information play a key role in supporting an open and factual discussion. Solidarity requires that people continue to trust each other and the authorities, and that they are ready to support political parties that want to invest in the welfare system. The welfare system also needs to move with the times; life styles and working practices are experiencing huge transformations. People's expectations are changing. The society needs to be able to respond to increasingly diverse demands and situations.

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21 https://sosiaalivakuutus.fi/sosiaaliturvan-kauneuskilpailu-osa-11-suomi-maailman-kattavin-sosiaaliturva-polkee-paikallaan/

22 https://researchportal.helsinki.fi/en/publications/recipe-for-better-life-experiences-from-nordic-countries

23 https://stm.fi/en/social-security-reform

The high rankings of Finland in many country surveys, including being "the World's Happiest Nation"[24] for the past five years, do not mean that our problems have been solved. We have challenges, but the strong social safety net has demonstrated its strengths also in the globalised and interdependent world.

[24] worldhappines.report

2. Ireland's Well-Being Journey

Larry O'Connell, Anne-Marie McGauran, Helen Johnston

Abbreviations

AGW	Auditor General
AIC	Actual Individual Consumption
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI*	Modified Gross National Income
IGEES	Irish Government Economic Evaluation Service
LSF	Living Standards Framework
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NPF	National Performance Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPNs	Public Participation Networks
SILC	Survey on Income and Living Conditions
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WBF	Well-being Framework

Introduction

There is growing and widespread recognition of the limits of existing approaches to measuring the progress of Nations. Traditional measures, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), are limited in terms of the economic insight they provide and in the degree to which they reflect societal and environmental issues.

The result is a growing international momentum behind developing alternative measures of progress and new ways of designing and implementing public policy, which ultimately link more closely to people's lived experience.

In Ireland, this search to improve how progress is measured has focused on well-being frameworks (WBFs). This paper argues that Ireland is on an important journey in its development of a WBF.

The first steps were taken by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) in the early 2010s. NESC's *Well-being Matters: A Social Report for Ireland* included a definition of well-being; the dimensions to be covered; and potential indicators, both subjective and objective. It also raised issues around the availability of data, and the question of how a well-being approach could be integrated into the public policy system (NESC, 2009).

Limited progress was made in Ireland to advance this agenda until the 2020 Programme for Government made a commitment to develop a focus on well-being in Ireland. This paper explores this work in some detail, including the development of an initial dashboard of indicators and how to embed the WBF into the policy process.

The next stage in the journey is about making sure that the initial vision and ambition are realised in practice. The dashboard of indicators could be characterised as a searchlight that can scan across dimensions of economy, society and environment in order to identify areas that require more attention. This paper also argues that a key element of the next phase of this journey is the ability to use the WBF to zone in on vulnerability and inequality. The paper contends that a crucial test for the WBF is the degree to which it can add value or bring a new perspective to issues such as child poverty.

The paper is structured as follows:

- **Purpose: Why Develop a WBF?** This section examines the experience of debating and adopting a WBF for public policy in Ireland. It outlines the rationale for well-being approaches, why they are being adopted internationally, and the typical elements of these approaches.
- **WBF in Action: What Steps Have Been Taken?** This section describes the work that has taken place since 2020 to advance the WBF agenda, including the consultation on the design of Ireland's vision and WBF.

- **Practicalities: How to Embed a WBF in Policy-Making.** This section outlines the research that has taken place in order to understand how WBFs are implemented in practice.
- **Making a Difference: How to Focus on Vulnerability and Inequality.** This section outlines the potential for these frameworks to address inequality, both nationally and internationally.
- **Where to Next?** The paper concludes by outlining the next steps that Ireland needs to take in order to embed a well-being approach into policy design and implementation.

Purpose: Why Develop a WBF?

A greater focus on well-being in public policy began with the recognition that GDP does not provide a sufficiently detailed picture of the living conditions that ordinary people experience.

The progress of countries has typically been measured using GDP – a measure of the value of goods and services produced by a country. However, GDP has limitations even as an economic measure. For example, Honohan (2021) has recently pointed out that Ireland's relative prosperity measured on the basis of Actual Individual Consumption (AIC) is substantially lower than on the basis of GDP or Modified Gross National Income (GNI*).[1] While Ireland's modified GNI* was 9 per cent above the European Union (EU) (28) average in 2019, actual individual consumption (AIC) (adjusted for consumer price differences) was 6 per cent below the EU average, and Ireland ranked twelfth within the EU on this.

GDP is also limited from a social or societal perspective as it is disconnected from living conditions, particularly from distributional outcomes and measures of inequality. This disconnect is evident in parts of our society and among specific cohorts where, despite clear economic progress, there is a strong sense of being left behind, stigmatised and alienated from the rest of society.

GDP also fails to adequately reflect the value of the environment or to give sufficient indication of the sustainability of current output or income. It is accepted that current patterns of resource use and economic activity are putting huge pressure on the planet, threatening our ability to meet future needs. The United Nations Development Programme *Human Development Report 2020: The*

[1] GNI*, or Modified Gross National Income, is an indicator designed specifically to measure the size of the Irish economy by excluding profits generated in Ireland but which belong to foreign owners. (CSO, undated).

Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene highlights that the climate crisis is deepening at the same time as 'the planet's biodiversity is plunging, with a quarter of species facing extinction, many within decades' (UNDP, 2021: 3). In Ireland, over 90 per cent of Ireland's protected habitats are in bad or inadequate condition (DCHG, 2018).

Therefore, a shift has occurred internationally towards a well-being approach that recognises the need for policy to move beyond GDP as the key measure of progress.

This involves measuring progress through the lived experience of citizens; by broadening the way progress is assessed in order to view it holistically across three broad areas – economic, social and environmental; and by considering progress in a future-focused way by taking account impacts of today's decisions on future generations (NESC, 2021).

This concern has led to the adoption of well-being approaches in public policy design and implementation. Well-being is a broad term, and tends to mean different things to different people. As the Department of Finance (2020) outlined:

> Wellbeing is a multidimensional concept for which no single definition has emerged. At an individual level, it relates to a person's physical, social and mental state.
>
> At the societal level, the concept of wellbeing encompasses objective and subjective features of current living conditions, including objective accounting of circumstances, such as income or life expectancy, but also reflecting subjective aspects of quality of life, such as feeling content. The components which make up wellbeing may also change over time, as society and the relative importance of different aspects of life evolve.

Despite the varying views of what well-being is, the adoption of a well-being approach in policy-making and implementation tends to include a number of typical elements, as outlined by NESC (2021). These elements comprise the following:

- A high-level statement of ambition or vision for well-being, comprising national goals, outcomes or priorities.

- Public involvement in developing well-being goals, often with lengthy consultations with both experts and citizens. Some countries have instituted ongoing consultation processes for policy implementation.
- Measurement of performance towards the national well-being goals against a dashboard of indicators. These dashboards vary in size. Some countries have a small number of headline indicators and a larger set of more finely grained ones.
- Regular publication of performance reports on well-being, in order to support monitoring and accountability. These are typically published annually, and are often submitted to Parliament. Some aim to frame budget discussion.
- Going beyond reporting, some countries have legislation to ensure continuity in, and accountability for, the well-being approach. Some countries have institutional structures with responsibility for well-being, some new and some pre-existing. Such structures serve a variety of purposes, with some established to advance the well-being agenda, while others aim to improve co-ordination.
- Application of a well-being approach to budgeting–this varies from using the indicator dashboard to frame budget discussions, to assessing budget proposals for their impact on well-being.
- New ways of working, with support and guidelines provided in a number of countries.

Adopting these elements of a well-being approach can help orientate work efforts in the policy system to improve individuals' lived experience. It can involve citizens in creating a shared vision and in mobilising action by linking policy implementation and review to the measured lived experience of citizens. However, the incorporation of these elements into policy-making is not without its challenges, an issue we will return to later.

WBF in Action: What Steps Have Been Taken?

As Ireland recovered from the financial crash in 2009, discussions on well-being took a back seat but were resurrected in the 2020 Programme for Government.

In the interim, international developments had created a focus on well-being, particularly in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which had already developed the Better Life Initiative and the How's Life? framework for measuring well-being and progress. In Ireland, work had

also taken place subnationally, with the Public Participation Networks (PPNs) developing *Visions for Community Wellbeing* across all local authority areas.

Recent NESC research in part fulfilment of the 2020 Programme for Government commitment initially sought to identify the potential associated with a well-being approach based on the views of stakeholders and experts as well as on relevant research. NESC's initial publication on the topic, *Ireland's Well-Being Framework: Consultation Report* (NESC, 2021), argued that a WBF provides a means to:

- Articulate a shared vision or ambitious idea about the future that people can relate to;
- Orientate work within the policy system towards achieving a shared vision and bringing about improvements in individuals' lived experience;
- Focus on trade-offs and outcomes, often new outcomes that have not been systematically included in decision-making in the past, such as social connections, quality of place, and sense of belonging or isolation;
- Reach out to and engage with organisations and citizens on their assessment of progress, obstacles, and lessons learned;
- Communicate more about progress, including progress at different levels – from micro-level projects, to programmes, to national policies and goals;
- Improve scrutiny and oversight, as these require policy-makers to state clearly what they understand well-being to mean and how they will monitor improvements or declines in well-being over time; and
- Ensure a just transition, which means that people, particularly those most adversely affected, are treated fairly in the creation of policies and projects aimed at developing a low-carbon society.

As such, NESC's research viewed WBFs as an opportunity to bring about transformation and to do so in a fairer and more equitable manner. This research suggests that WBFs provide a vehicle for cross-governmental collaborative thinking that could help break down the barriers of a 'silo mentality'.[2]

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[2] Government departments and agencies have traditionally been organised to co-ordinate vertically ('silos') rather than horizontally. This means that, for example, policies designed by departments of health traditionally focused on the health

It argued that the more consultative and participative route, which underpins the well-being work, builds upon the assumption that policy affects everyone and therefore everyone should have a say in how those policies are developed. The well-being work offers a basis for enquiring into, measuring and creating processes of engagement to work on what is most valued by people across the whole island, which in turn will enable people to live more fulfilling lives, now and into the future.

Thus, in order to support the development of the Government's first report on developing a WBF, NESC consulted with relevant stakeholders and groups on the adoption of the OECD's How's Life? framework as a basis for an Irish framework. A survey of 450 stakeholders and groups found strong support for the framework and that the 11 well-being dimensions of the OECD's framework resonated strongly in Ireland.[3] However, there were also a number of specific issues and concerns among Irish citizens, including: culture, language and heritage; access to services and amenities; social connections; access to green space and nature; giving adequate weighting to a focus on the future, in particular environmental sustainability; and the need for clear and transparent criteria for selecting indicators.

Informed by the NESC consultation, the Irish Government published its first report on a developing a WBF in July 2021 (Government of Ireland, 2021). This report provided an initial vision for well-being in Ireland and a conceptual framework encompassing 11 dimensions of well-being, based on the OECD's How's Life? framework.

Reflecting this support for the OECD approach, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) developed a dashboard of 35 indicators measuring well-being in Ireland (CSO, 2021).

Since then, the Department of the Taoiseach has overseen further work to develop Ireland's initial Well-Being Framework. This included a public consultation that ran from October 2021 to January 2022, which included a comprehensive communications campaign; an online stakeholder event; an online survey; thematic workshops with Public Participation Networks and

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system, and not on the social or socioeconomic determinants of health such as unemployment, overcrowding and poverty.

3 The 11 well-being dimensions are: income and wealth; work and job quality; housing; health; knowledge and skills; environment quality; subjective well-being; safety; work–life balance; social connections; and civic engagement.

young people; and interactive presentations. An online Well-being portal, in addition to the CSO's Well-being Information Hub, was also launched, providing comprehensive accessible information and an interactive dashboard of key indicators, respectively.

Additional cross-governmental research has also been conducted, in order to further develop the WBF. This includes a Department of Finance review examining how sustainability will be integrated into Ireland's WBF (Department of Finance, 2022). In addition, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) is continuing its work by examining the relationship between public policy and well-being (Kennedy, forthcoming).

NESC also carried out further research on embedding WBFs into policy-making in New Zealand, Scotland and Wales, and how these frameworks have been applied in relation to children in Ireland, Scotland and New Zealand (McGauran & Kennedy, 2022). This, alongside the public consultation, and the research undertaken by the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, has informed this further development of Ireland's well-being initiative.

A second Government report, published in June 2022, captures the outcomes of this second phase of work, reflected in an updated WBF for Ireland, which continues to include the 11 dimensions of well-being, and the cross-cutting themes of sustainability and equality. Some adjustments were made to the dimensions in order to emphasise mental health; broader skills across the life cycle (rather than formal education); the protection of Ireland's environment, climate and biodiversity; and a focus on open government with which citizens can meaningfully engage.[4]

At the same time as Ireland has been developing a WBF and associated indicator dashboard, there have also been well-being developments in Northern Ireland. With the support of the Carnegie (UK) Trust, Northern Ireland has been establishing a WBF, with a number of iterations, since 2013. More recently, attention has been given to the development of well-being initiatives at the local government level through community planning partnerships.

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[4] More specifically, the names of a number of the dimensions were also changed, with 'Housing and Local Area' in the first Government report becoming 'Housing and Built Environment'; 'Knowledge and Skills' changing to 'Knowledge, Skills and Innovation'; 'Community, Social Connections and Cultural Participation' changing to 'Connections, Community and Participation'; and 'Civic Engagement and Cultural Expression' changing to 'Civil Engagement, Trust and Cultural Expression'.

How to Embed a WBF in Policy-Making

While there is clear potential associated with WBFs, a recurring theme that emerged during NESC's research and consultation process was that of impact: how will the WBF be used, and how will it actually change outcomes?

NESC examined how Ireland might move from its current position – adoption of a WBF – to its systematic use in policy-making, with consequent conceptual and instrumental effects (McGauran & Kennedy, 2022).

To capture the full potential benefit of a well-being approach, this NESC research found that countries go beyond reporting on indicators. Well-being data and analysis are integrated into policy formulation, budgetary allocations and policy evaluation.

As previously noted, NESC's research examined the experience of embedding WBFs into policy-making in New Zealand, Scotland and Wales. It also explored some aspects of how well-being approaches have been applied in one specific sector, child well-being, in Ireland, New Zealand and Scotland.

Box 1 provides a brief overview of the well-being approaches adopted by each of the three countries examined.

Box 1: Well-Being Approaches in New Zealand, Wales & Scotland – Key Highlights

The **New Zealand** Treasury uses two WBFs (The Treasury, 2021): the Living Standards Framework (LSF), which is modelled on the OECD's How's Life? framework, and the He Ara Waiora framework, which reflects a Māori view of well-being. The primary purpose of the two frameworks is to inform Treasury advice to Government on policy priorities for improving citizens' well-being, such as advice on Budget priorities, and for well-being and stewardship reporting.

The Public Finance (Wellbeing) Amendment Act 2020 helps to embed well-being objectives into the budgeting process. The Fiscal Strategy Report, which is presented on Budget Day, must explain how well-being objectives have guided the Government's budget decisions, and provide an assessment of the extent to which fiscal performance has been consistent with its strategy.

The Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018 also requires the Government to report each Budget Day on a set of child poverty measures.

Wales uses legislation as the main vehicle for embedding the well-being approach. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 aims to put sustainable development at the centre of decision-making. The Act also places a duty on public bodies to set and publish objectives to show how they will achieve the overall vision for Wales. The Auditor General for Wales (AGW) carries out examinations of the public bodies listed in the Act. The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and the Welsh Government published a Future Generations Framework for Projects (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, undated) in order to provoke thought and discussion, assist in decision-making in public bodies about new ways of working, ensure services are resilient, and improve the well-being of citizens now and in the future.

The Welsh Government also publishes annual progress reports on the progress towards meeting well-being objectives, by referring to national indicators and milestones.

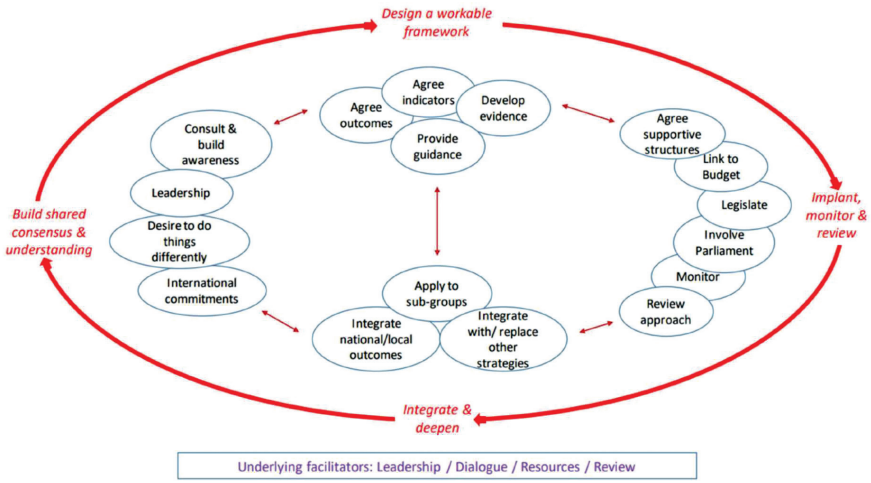
Scotland's National Performance Framework (NPF), introduced in 2007, sets out an overall purpose and vision for Scotland and includes 'increased well-being' as one of 11 broad National Outcomes.

Under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, public bodies are legally required to take well-being approaches into account in their work (Scottish Government, 2017). Priority budgeting also aims to allocate money to services that should contribute most to priority outcomes. The Scottish Government has produced a booklet to guide policy-makers' budget decisions.

The Auditor General for Scotland is involved in monitoring the extent to which a well-being approach is embedded.

Five key lessons were drawn from the NESC research examining how WBFs work in practice in these countries.

Figure 1: Embedding a Well-being Approach



First, a number of key elements were found to underpin WBFs (Figure 1):

- **Building a shared consensus and understanding.** The impetus to begin work on well-being was found to come from different sources, including: meeting international commitments on e.g. sustainability and child development, or domestic issues such as a desire to approach policy-making differently. Strong leaders, from both public administration and politics, often initiated the process of adopting a well-being approach in policy-making, and in most cases significant dialogue and consultation took place in order to build awareness.
- **Designing a workable framework.** The frameworks adopted include agreed national outcomes or objectives, a suite of indicators to measure progress towards these, and the development of new evidence and data sources to provide more information relevant to policy decisions on the range of national objectives. The countries studied also develop support and guidance for policy-makers and other stakeholders in adopting a well-being approach.
- **Monitoring and review.** Different processes are used to implant a well-being approach in day-to-day policy-making; there is no 'one size fits all'. Some countries use legislation, some use budgetary

processes. Several use structures, either existing or new, to increase awareness, provide guidance, and monitor progress on implementing the well-being approach. Some involve Parliament in monitoring progress. The countries studied all review their national WBFs after a number of years. There is a legislative requirement for some of the countries to review their WBFs, while for others it is voluntary. The review processes are typically used to identify strengths and barriers in current approaches, and to address the latter.

- **Integrating and deepening.** As the countries studied seek to integrate the use of a WBF with existing policy, and to adopt an integrated approach towards well-being in both national and local level policy-making, a process of 'digging deeper' also occurs.

Some countries work towards an integrated approach by requiring both local and national bodies to meet national well-being objectives. Some have passed new legislation to enable organisations to work together towards shared well-being objectives. A number have adopted targeted approaches to address the well-being of particular groups, and consultation and dialogue with these groups is key to the WBF.

Second, NESC's research found that learning from each of these stages can help strengthen other stages. And, in a circular fashion, the outcomes of review and reflection on progress to date can help develop a renewed shared understanding of, and consensus on, the role of a well-being approach. In turn, this leads to further refinement of the outcomes sought, the indicators to measure progress, and the supports needed for stakeholders to do this work. This then leads to strengthening of processes for implanting, monitoring and accountability, thus further embedding well-being approaches in policy-making.

The experience in the countries studied shows that embedding these approaches takes time. For example, New Zealand first adopted the LSF in 2011, while Scotland's NPF dates back to 2007. While the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 expedited the embedding of a well-being approach, the origins of the approach date back to 1998 and the original legislation on devolution.

Third, the research also found that, for all stages of embedding a well-being approach into policy-making, there is a need for leadership; dialogue with all stakeholders, including the public; resources to support adoption of the WBF; and processes of review and reflection.

Fourth, the research noted that it is a challenge to develop robust evidence that demonstrates causal links between outcomes and the well-being approach and particular policy interventions.

There are many potential drivers of well-being outcomes, including external conditions, personal resources, and circumstances. In addition, many aspects of the social impacts do not have ready market values and are difficult to measure. It is also the case that the policy actions that are taken often play out over long periods of time.

All these factors mean that it can be difficult to tease out the specific impact of policy interventions on well-being outcomes.

Fifth, despite the challenges involved assessing the specific impacts of well-being approaches, evaluations of these approaches do record benefits from adopting them. It is useful here to consider how evaluation studies typically categorise effects from evaluation analyses. They note three types of effects:

1. symbolic, with evaluation results used to justify a pre-existing position;
2. conceptual, where evaluation results lead to a better understanding of the object of evaluation; and
3. instrumental, where evaluation results inform decision-making and lead to changes in the object of evaluation (Ledermann, 2012).

For example, the mid-term review of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020,* the policy which focused on improving well-being outcomes for children and youth in Ireland, recorded a number of conceptual and instrumental impacts. These include:

- formal high-level structures for cross-collaboration and inter-departmental working, which have helped embed these practices in day-to-day work;
- greater shared understanding of, and agreement on, key issues affecting children's well-being;
- joint policy documents to tackle e.g. childhood obesity; and
- changes to specific welfare payments for children, which aim to improve their well-being (DCYA, 2018).

As an example of instrumental effects, in Wales, examination of the economic, environmental and health consequences of extending the M4 motorway led to the project being cancelled, as the long-term negative environmental and health consequences of the proposal were deemed to be greater than its economic benefits (McGauran & Kennedy, 2022).

Building on this research, the second Irish Government report outlines an approach for embedding a WBF into policy-making over time, which includes:

- annually published, high-level analysis of the well-being dashboard and incorporation into the Budget process;
- complementary, continued embedding into expenditure and evaluation policy;
- promotion of relevant research and policy developments; and
- clear supporting structures.

The Irish WBF, as a cross-governmental initiative, will continue to be led by the Department of the Taoiseach, and jointly sponsored by the Departments of Finance, and Public Expenditure and Reform.

There is also a clear recognition of, and work taking place, to ensure that the WBF is closely connected to three cross-governmental approaches to budgeting, namely:

- **Performance-based budgeting:** This aims to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public expenditure by linking the funding of public sector organisations to the results they deliver, making systematic use of performance information.
- **Equality budgeting:** This is a process in which the budget is recognised as something more than a neutral process of resource allocation, but is considered a value-laden process that embodies, and potentially informs and influences, long-standing societal choices about how resources are deployed; and
- **Green budgeting:** This is the use of the budgetary system to promote and achieve environmental outcomes, which is now also being developed to complement these processes (DPER, 2022).

Making a Difference: How to Focus on Vulnerability and Inequality

The development of a WBF in Ireland is an explicit attempt to approach policy work and priority-setting in a fresh and innovative manner.

It aims to place a shared vision, priorities and agreed outcomes, and the processes of ongoing consultation that shape each of these, at the centre of a more cross-cutting approach to policy-making. It involves the development of data linked to citizens' lived experience as a means of gauging and reviewing progress. It resonates strongly with NESC's long-standing view of the need to attend carefully to the overarching system of priority-setting and resource allocation.

To fully capture the potential of a WBF means that there is a compelling case for focusing on inequality.

The NESC consultation on a WBF that was held with Irish stakeholder groups stressed the importance of equity and equality, and how a WBF could support this (NESC, 2021). In answer to the question 'I want an Ireland where ...', equality was raised most frequently and it crossed a range of dimensions including equal opportunities, income, distribution of wealth, fairness, access to services and equality among different groups in society (equality of conditions). The eradication of poverty was important for respondents. Measures suggested to address poverty include effective support structures being in place for people experiencing poverty, and an adequate income. Respondents also suggested including disaggregated poverty indicators.

However, the concern with equality appears to be broad, reflecting a desire to ensure that a 'spirit of equity' or 'social friendship' becomes more evident in Ireland. Survey respondents frequently linked equality with ensuring societal well-being: a fair and equitable society is needed to ensure citizens' well-being and to enable the making of collective decisions in the common interest. The need for robust indicators relating to equality was also emphasised by respondents, including measuring equality of access to services, amenities and opportunities.

This concern with equality reflects characteristics of the Irish economy, including:

- the high degree of market income inequality,[5] which is the gap between cohorts before incomes are adjusted by tax and welfare payments. Market income inequality in Ireland is one of the highest in the EU, albeit reduced to close to the EU average for disposable incomes, through tax and transfers;
- wealth inequality, which is twice the rate of income inequality, with home ownership a key contributor to wealth;
- the poverty rate of several groups, particularly those reliant on welfare payments, with consistent poverty rates highest among those with a disability, the unemployed, jobless households and lone parents;[6] and
- unequal access to affordable reliable services.

The use of a WBF may offer opportunities to address these inequalities. The forthcoming DPER report on incorporating well-being into public policy (Kennedy, forthcoming) notes that one of the benefits of a WBF is its focus on human experience, as this facilitates the identification of varied experiences and opportunities among different groups of people, potentially leading to more effective policy design to help address these variations. The cross-governmental application of equality budgeting complements this approach.

A number of international WBFs have experience of addressing inequality, as outlined in next section.

International Experience in Addressing Inequality

Scotland and New Zealand have explicit mechanisms in place to support a focus on equality. Their experience suggests that a variety of methods can be used, e.g. measuring the position of disadvantaged groups, engaging with them, and targeting their supports.

One mechanism is to provide breakdowns of national macro-level indicators by e.g. gender, age, income, family type and ethnic background, as is the case

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[5] This definition of market income inequality is based on that used in the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC), and includes earned income, income from rent, dividends and investments, and private pensions. See CSO, 2018 in the References section for further information.

[6] Consistent poverty rates are calculated from SILC, which, as a survey of private households, has limited data on Travellers, people experiencing homelessness and asylum seekers. However, poverty rates among these groups are also considered very high, as many of the groups have characteristics associated with poverty, such as unemployment, low levels of education, and living in non-owner accommodation.

in Scotland and New Zealand. This shows the extent to which the well-being of such groups differs from the average.

Another mechanism used is legislation that sets targets to reduce child poverty and that requires national and/or local bodies to outline their plans for achieving these targets.

Scotland's legislation requires action in relation to some specific groups particularly affected by child poverty, such as children in lone parent households, children in a household where a parent has a vulnerability, and children living in persistent poverty. The Scottish legislation is also wide-ranging (as well-being approaches generally aim to be) and seeks action not just on direct income for households where children live in poverty, but also on education, housing, childcare, and physical and mental health. The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 requires consultation with individuals affected by poverty, as well as their representative groups, as part of creating a delivery plan for meeting child poverty targets.

New Zealand requires that its Budget Statement includes information on how the Budget will reduce child poverty, putting a political and media spotlight on actions in this regard. A Government action plan to reduce child poverty has led to the development of a Families Package with a wide range of measures to tackle child poverty. These include the Best Start tax credit of NZ$60 per week for the year following the birth of every child, increased paid parental leave, a Working for Families tax credit, and increased Accommodation Supplement and Winter Energy payments (Bennett, 2018). Another mechanism used to protect the income of poor families is that, from 2020, schools that draw their pupils from lower-income areas may receive an NZ$150 payment per student, per year, if they agree not to ask parents and caregivers for voluntary donations (New Zealand Government, undated). Almost 90 per cent of eligible schools opted in to this scheme (Cooke, 2019).

In addition, to address the overrepresentation of Māori in the New Zealand criminal justice system, a new culturally sensitive, co-designed initiative was established, in which policy-makers and system administrators collaborate with community and tribal representatives to ensure a Māori- and family-centred approach to criminal justice. This type of preventative approach is likely to be cost-effective in the long run (Mintrom, 2019).

These actions suggest that the use of disaggregated data when adopting well-being approaches can highlight the position of groups impacted by inequality,

while the broad consultation processes typical of well-being approaches can help to identify issues that need to be tackled in order to reduce inequality. Similarly, the wide-ranging and collaborative scope of policy actions suggested by well-being approaches can lead to changes in a range of policy areas that contribute to inequality.

It is notable that both Scotland and New Zealand have used traditional tools – legislation, along with targets, and specific supports – to ensure a long-term focus on improving the conditions of groups affected by inequality.

Intensifying the Spotlight on Inequality in Ireland

The NESC well-being consultation process for designing an Irish WBF demonstrated that the demand for a spirit of equity in policy was deeply linked to agency, where individuals feel independently able to act and to create circumstances that affect their lives and livelihoods. Equality was also seen as a concern for current, and future generations and therefore deeply connected to ensuring that we live within planetary and natural boundaries.

Addressing inequality requires adequate investment in the infrastructure of society, as understood in the broad sense. A good historical example of this is the impact on populations' health and well-being that resulted from municipalities' investment in water supply and sewage disposal in the late 19th century. A more recent example is the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Addressing inequality also requires a mix of income measures such as: adequate social welfare payments; supports to enable the transition from welfare to work; and access to decent jobs with acceptable rates of pay. Taxation and tax expenditures also have a fundamental bearing on inequality.

Provision of access to quality human services and amenities (such as green spaces), tailored and targeted to the needs of all individuals, is essential to achieving improvements in equality (NESC, 2005; NESC, 2020). The concern with access to services in health and education, for example, was stressed during the consultation. Tailored universalism, meaning that, as far as possible, providers embrace the challenge of adjusting their services to accommodate a more diverse public with different requirements, has always been regarded by NESC as critical to the realisation of equal opportunity (NESC, 2005; NESC, 2009). The concern with access to services is not a 'residual' that is only interested in the needs of the most disadvantaged, but a universal issue concerned with

adressing the structural flaws that compromise any overall vision shaped by equity, agency and sustainability.

It is also suggested that addressing inequality long-term may require the Government to consider the pattern of its own policies and the signal it sends to society regarding the respective roles of the State, the market, and civil society in using the new WBF to transform people's lived experience. There are many ways – procurement, investment, tax, regulation, employee and business supports, education, etc. – in which the approach taken by the State has a profound impact on societal relationships and on fostering a spirit of equity among citizens.

There is a need to develop a deeper understanding of the factors that foster a spirit of equity in Ireland. A starting point may be to revisit specific cohorts that consistently experience disadvantage, and to explore how to break the pattern of continuing and intergenerational inequality. NESC's work in this area, including its work on welfare, standards and human services, and jobless households (NESC, 2009; NESC, 2012b; NESC, 2012a; NESC, 2020), can provide important insights.

Where to Next?

With a framework for well-being in Ireland now adopted, the next step is to move towards applying it to policy development. The OECD's work on well-being shows that bridging the gap between well-being metrics and policy intervention is a challenge.

In the first instance, beginning work on the initial Government commitments to embed well-being into policy-making will help. These commitments are:

- the annual publication of high-level analysis of the well-being dashboard of indicators;
- incorporation of the dashboard into the Budget process and expenditure, and evaluation of policy;
- promotion of relevant research and policy developments; and
- clear supporting structures.

In terms of the next stages of Ireland's journey in the development of its WBF, there are five issues that need to be considered:

- Issue 1: How to optimise consultation processes;
- Issue 2: How to enhance the data and evidence base;

- Issue 3: How to integrate the WBF with the policy system;
- Issue 4: How to improve the governance of the WBF; and
- Issue 5: How to link the WBF and Shared Island.

This paper will conclude by commenting briefly on each.

Issue 1: How to Optimise Consultation Processes

Consultation processes are an integral part of the evolution of WBFs, and has been an important dimension in the development of Ireland's WBF. Further time and resources need to be devoted to enhancing consultation and dialogue with stakeholders, including those using services, in a variety of organisations. This can help embed consultative processes and work towards co-design.

An issue to be borne in mind is ensuring the right balance between generating a vision and being able to assess outcomes.

It is also important to note that while Government policy, supported by three consultation processes on developing a WBF, has decided on a suite of indicators, debate continues in the literature and research on the potential merits of a composite well-being index.

Issue 2: How to Enhance the Data and Evidence Base

While a range of useful indicators to measure well-being has been assembled in the CSO's Well-being Information Hub, there are data gaps including in the areas of environmental indicators; housing costs; information on civic engagement and cultural activity; and measures of equality of access to services, amenities and opportunities.

It is helpful that the CSO has committed to prioritising the collection of more well-being data over time but short- to medium-term development of this work is needed.

It would be useful to further promote the value of different types of evidence and data in the Irish context, e.g. those based on qualitative data and subjective evidence, which are a particularly useful input for a policy approach looking at the lived experience of the population.

The CSO's commitment to incorporating official data not currently held by the CSO, for future iterations of the dashboard, is welcome in this regard.

It is also important to ensure the continued communication of the well-being data available, including breakdowns by socio-economic status and geographic area.

These can help ensure that policy-makers in a range of sectors use the data, including in budget processes.

Issue 3: How to Integrate the WBF with the Policy System

It is important that we continue to examine the potential for further incorporation of well-being requirements into standard Budget procedures and processes in the long term. Ireland must continue to develop methods to assess how policies have contributed to outcomes, particularly in policy areas (e.g. education) where multiple factors influence the outcome.

A number of countries that are more advanced on their well-being journey than Ireland have been grappling with how a well-being approach can co-ordinate a range of national work. The approach often adopted is to have a small range of key national goals that all agencies work towards.

Linking national and local work on well-being is an important dimension worthy of further exploration.

It may also be helpful to investigate the extent to which it would be useful and possible to align geographical boundaries of statutory organisations (as is currently being done with Regional Health Areas under Sláintecare), and to assess if this would assist co-operation between organisations.

Implementing and integrating a well-being approach will take time, training and collaborative working relationships. It will be important to ensure that there is a pipeline of staff skilled in this type of work to replace those who move on. There may be a role for the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) in providing analytical capacity here.

An issue to bear in mind when thinking about integration is the extent to which the WBF aims to impact on action across all policy areas compared with a stronger focus on one or two key issues, such as child poverty.

This also raises the point that while a well-being approach allows a wide range of issues to be considered in policy-making, trade-offs still need to be made.

Issue 4: How to Improve the Governance of the WBF

As Ireland's well-being initiative beds down, it would be valuable to assess whether legislative support would aid the embedding of a well-being approach in the Irish context.

Some countries are required by legislation to review their WBFs while, for others, doing this is voluntary. It would be useful to consider including a review process in the Irish context, first reflecting on the most appropriate mechanism to generate such a review.

Given the role of Auditor Generals in monitoring implementation of well-being approaches in Scotland and Wales, there could be benefits in investigating whether involving the Comptroller and Auditor General in monitoring Ireland's WBF would be a useful future avenue for Ireland.

In addition, a number of countries involve Parliament in monitoring accountability for a well-being approach. This ranges from reporting to a parliamentary committee, to Parliamentary debate on the country's progress towards well-being. Again, this is an option that Ireland could consider as its well-being journey progresses.

Issue 5: How to link the WBF and Shared Island

Northern Ireland has already developed a WBF, but there has been limited co-operation between Ireland and Northern Ireland in the development of these frameworks, despite some engagement between the respective statistical offices and some limited consultation and representation on advisory groups.

There is potential for further co-operation in a number of areas, which would capture progress across the island as well as within the two jurisdictions, and at the local level.

This could include the use of the WBF as a tool to facilitate engagement with a wide range of stakeholders across the island, to inform priorities in relation to key challenges, and to learn from each other. There is also the opportunity for engagement on data and indicator development, for representation on advisory groups to include a north–south and east–west dimension, and for greater co-operation at the local level – for example, between Community Planning

Partnerships in Northern Ireland and the Public Participation Networks (PPNs) in Ireland (NESC, 2022).

These issues are likely to be addressed in other presentations later today, adding to our knowledge of how best to incorporate a well-being approach into Irish policy- making and implementation of policy.

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3. A Birdseye View of Well-being: Exploring a Multidimensional Measure for the United Kingdom

Sabina Alkire, Fanni Kovesdi*

Abstract

This paper explores a new approach to capturing well-being and human development in a single, joint multidimensional index that is at once intuitive, rigorous and policy salient. Based on Amartya Sen's capability approach and the Alkire-Foster method as adapted in Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Index, the paper presents a new exploratory Multidimensional Well-being Index (MWI) for the United Kingdom. The aim of the paper is twofold: Inform the debate on the measurement of well-being and of human development more generally, and illustrate the added value of a single rigorous metric in the form of an index, as a complementary headline measure to GDP. The MWI presented here follows a subset of the domains and indicators from the official national well-being dashboard for the United Kingdom, and is constructed from a single wave of Understanding Society (Wave 9) data. Findings are presented at the national level and decomposed by population subgroups and regions to reveal inequalities in well-being across the population. The indicators are data constrained so we recommend the results be interpreted as illustrating a methodology that could be insightful for policy if appropriate indicators were agreed by due process. Results show that 44 percent of the population enjoys satisfactory levels of well-being, but this varies greatly. For instance, across ethnic groups, 53 percent of people from White background enjoy favourable well-being, but that is the case for only 35 percent of people from All other ethnic groups combined, and only 27 percent of persons who self-identify as being of Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British background. Many people report lacking a balanced diet and minimum physical exercise, as well as feeling unhappy, anxious and unsatisfied

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with income or leisure time. This highlights the need for policy focus on these areas if well-being is to be raised and maintained for all.

Keywords: human development, well-being, wellbeing, well-being measurement, capability approach, Alkire-Foster, United Kingdom, disaggregation, Understanding Society, subjective wellbeing, life satisfaction, GNH, Bhutan, multidimensional well-being index

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1. Introduction

Recent public discourse evinces a clear hunger to bring well-being to the centre of the frame of articulate societal objectives. For many, this is in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which refocused attention on topics previously often perceived as 'personal' or secondary to economic and political affairs. Such topics include health behaviours, food security, family relationships, mental health and psychological well-being, physical exercise, access to natural and sacred spaces, community engagement, and acts of generosity and solidarity. Such changes in discourse and priorities reflect the new circumstances many have experienced. Living in the shadow of grave dangers to human life (from the disease but also from threats ranging from food insecurity to domestic violence), and accompanied by the stress of unemployment, uncertainty and waiting, many suddenly entered a world in which economic activities were not the overwhelming lodestar. Even though the economic calculus, very rightly, is ever part of the discussion, and the forthcoming recession is viewed with great trepidation, many were exposed to new challenges affecting quality of life. Boundaries between work, school and personal activities became unexpectedly porous as many were catapulted into remote working alongside children and other household members, while regular social contact with relatives, friends and colleagues ceased overnight. What space does this open for policy-salient measures of well-being?

It is very much hoped that the pandemic will be controlled, any recession will be short-lived and life will again take a more predictable cadence. Nevertheless, the uprooting of well-established habits offers an opportunity to reassess public policy priorities—including measures by which progress is assessed. If a country road has been used by tractors for many seasons, the tracks cut deeply into the earth, making it nearly impossible to waver from the usual course. But after a storm, when the ground is soft, if the tractor suddenly skates across at a different angle due to an overpowering wind, then the possibility of taking a new course or some modification of it persists for some time. The pandemic has softened the ground in terms of societal markers of success and created a fresh space in which to consider holistic well-being measures. Such measures could better encapsulate the wider aspects of life that gained centre-ground over the last year. With countries considering how to restart a 'new normal', this offers an opportunity to address human well-being in a new context, complementing well-established economic indicators of progress. Monetary measures cannot alone capture the multidimensional nature of human life, nor are they well-equipped to capture and track changes in psychological and physical well-being, education, employment or living conditions. The pandemic has highlighted the centrality of these issues, confirming that well-being is indeed multidimensional, and that human development does not necessarily equate to economic progress.

Moreover, it may be desirable to identify and consciously hone beneficial changes that occurred during the pandemic, such as increased attention to issues of food security, loneliness and social connections, or the uptake in physical activity, online learning, volunteering and community initiatives under national lockdowns. Many of these activities add value to people's lives, but gross domestic product (GDP)—the single monetary measure used to track the progress of a country—does not account for unpaid activities such as caring or volunteering. Being a unidimensional measure, it fails to address the complex nature of human well-being. Likewise it may be desirable to consciously focus on new priorities that became more visible and articulated as contributing to well-being, such as the desire for flexible working, green spaces or time spent with loved ones. How could investigations into measurement help to improve and consolidate some of these new tracks and ensure that well-being is placed at the centre of governance in the campaign to 'build back better'?

This paper proposes for public discussion a trial Multidimensional Well-being Index (MWI) for the United Kingdom. It could equivalently be considered a Multidimensional Index of Human Flourishing, a second generation multidimensional measure of human development. But to avoid any possible

confusion with the famous Human Development Index (HDI), this paper will refer to the measure as the MWI.

The MWI presented in this paper is an easy to understand, intuitive measure with the potential (once data constraints are addressed) to complement GDP as a headline statistic of human well-being. Based on the Alkire-Foster method, the MWI is statistically rigorous and methodologically precise, and, most essentially, is suitable for designing policy interventions and monitoring improvements in well-being over time. Methodologically, the proposed measure uses the person-centred counting methodology of Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index, which has been used for over 10 years to shape programmes and policies, and to spark public discussion. Conveniently for the human development family of measures, the MWI, and the underlying GNH Index, adapt the Alkire-Foster method, which is already widely used in poverty measurement, such as the global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) released annually by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and UNDP. Conceptually, this approach is coherent with a number of theoretical approaches to well-being, including the human development and capability approach of UNDP. Empirically, the paper illustrates the MWI using trial indicators covering the 10 domains of well-being in the United Kingdom, identified by the Office for National Statistics, to the extent possible from the ninth wave of the nationally representative Understanding Society survey. And while the proposed index is data-constrained, and challenges remain in adopting indicators related to environmental conditions, employment, safety or group membership, to name a few, the index nevertheless offers a new approach that is policy relevant, and can demonstrate the benefits of using an index to measure and analyse well-being across the population.

The paper proceeds as follows. The next, second section outlines the motivation for this study, and its relationship to human development and well-being measurement. It also sketches the example of Bhutan's innovative GNH Index to illustrate how the MWI could track changes and provide a focus for public policy. The section finishes with an overview of the well-being landscape in the United Kingdom over the last decade. The third section presents the Alkire-Foster method and its innovative application to well-being in the GNH Index, and proposes the trial MWI for the United Kingdom. The fourth section introduces the data and specifications for the selected indicators and dimensions, and sets out two proposed indices and weighting structures. The fifth section presents headline statistics from the MWI across the five gradients and decomposed by subgroups and indicators to focus on disparities in well-being across the population. The sixth section sets out some closing ideas around the findings,

and suggestions on how to improve well-being in the United Kingdom. Finally, the paper concludes by highlighting the limitations of the index and the data used, and proposes future ideas and improvements for a well-being index.

2. Background and motivation

2.1 Global Agenda

In 1990, the pioneering *Human Development Report* led by Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq, and drawing on Amartya Sen's capability approach, articulated the concept of people-centred development. It set as the central objective of human development the expansion of human freedoms and capabilities across multiple dimensions. Other phenomenon such as economic growth were to be advanced not as ends in themselves but insofar as they contributed to this objective. To demonstrate the impact of this shift in perspective empirically, a new and elementary index, the HDI, was developed. It contained national data on education and health (life expectancy) in addition to GDP per capita, and ranked countries according to a composite score. Interestingly, the ranking differed, at times markedly, from country rankings according to gross national product (GNP) per capita, revealing a disjuncture between economic growth and human progress and well-being as captured by the non-monetary indicators of the HDI (UNDP 1990). This simple technique of widening the goalposts by which success is evaluated sparked practical changes in terms of investments in health and education. Over time, the introduction of the HDI opened up a new avenue for research on multidimensional measurement of well-being and poverty, which always considered information on non-income capabilities.[1]

The fundamental driving idea of the *Human Development Reports*—namely, their focus on human lives and capabilities rather than on political or economic objectives—garnered widespread interest, although it took time to swing the focus of mainstream discourse. Policy discussion during the 1990s mainly focused on the role of economic growth, austerity and post-conflict strategies, although the *Human Development Reports* and *World Development Reports* also explored wider considerations ranging from empowerment and poverty to environment and gender. During the next two decades, a parallel literature in economics emerged that, while advocating a move beyond income to proxy human well-being, pursued a unidimensional approach focused on happiness and subjective-well-being in the form of self-reported happiness, evaluative life

[1] Alkire 2002; Anand and Sen 1996, 2000; Clark 2002; Fukuda-Parr 2003; Gasper 2004; Nussbaum 2001; Ranis, Stewart and Samman 2006; ul Haq 1995; UNDP 1990.

satisfaction, mood, domain satisfaction and positive affect.[2] With this literature in full blossom, the *World Happiness Report* was launched to provide a view of Western measures of evaluative subjective well-being across countries and to focus on topics related to happiness.[3]

By making visible the shortcomings of GDP per capita, the HDI opened a conversation that many joined about how to improve such measures—with new dimensions including health, education, subjective well-being, and others like political voice, relationships, environment, work and time use. Similarly, in an effort to address the increasingly evident limitations of economic indicators such as GDP and gross national income (GNI), the Beyond GDP Initiative was set up in Europe to develop non-monetary indicators of progress that capture environmental and social aspects of well-being. These political and academic developments, coupled with public dissatisfaction with existing statistical measures of social and economic progress, also led to the formation of a commission by France's then President Sarkozy to explore new ways of capturing information on human and economic development. Co-chaired by Amartya Sen, Joseph Stiglitz and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, the Commission published its report in 2009, stating that the "time is ripe for our measurement system to shift emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring people's well-being" (Sen, Stiglitz and Fitoussi 2009, p. 12). One of the three themes addressed quality of life, and emphasized the need for multidimensional measures to capture the complexities of well-being, laying bare the foundation for emerging work on the topic. As a follow-up to the recommendations of the Commission, in 2011, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) launched a Better Life Initiative to inform and unify measurement across countries and organisations. As part of the initiative, it introduced the Better Life Index (BLI), an HDI-style composite index that compiles 11 indicators, with the online platform offering users the chance to adjust weights to reflect differing personal values and preferences. The BLI captures many of the topics outlined by the Commission, with indicators on material deprivations and quality of life. In addition, the biannually released *How's Life* reports provide an assessment

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[2] For various perspectives, see Argyle 1991, Cummins 2000, Diener et al. 2009, Helliwell and Wang 2012, Layard 2005, Kahneman 2011, Ricard 2007 and Seligman 2012, among others.

[3] *The World Happiness Report* was launched to mark World Happiness Day, an initiative of the Royal Government of Bhutan endorsed by the UN General Assembly. Bhutan's GNH Index, however, which had generated such international interest, was not pursued. A single-indicator ranking from the Gallup Poll has been used to rank countries in terms of evaluative life satisfaction.

of well-being across OECD nations, alongside evolving and best practices in measurement.

In international fora, 2018-2019 was a landmark period for global work on well-being with the release of the final, three-volume report of the International Panel on Social Progress at Princeton. A summary "Manifesto" proposed alternatives to GDP and also canvassed, systematically, different dimensions of well-being (IPSP 2018, Fleurbaey et al. 2018). The authors called for an adaptation of the agenda and framework for sustainable development, and advocated new ideas and institutions to ensure sustained social progress, manifested in equity and freedom for all, and environment sustainability. Simultaneously, the OECD released two volumes on the follow-up to the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission, now co-led by Joseph Stiglitz, Jean-Paul Fitoussi and Martine Durand (2018a and 2018b).

Beyond the international response, many national initiatives sprung up, involving citizen consultations to articulate the appropriate domains of well-being and inform the work of statistical offices designing new indicators and measures (Stiglitz, Fitoussi and Durand 2018a). For instance, New Zealand invested in a new generation of work on well-being and public policy, and produced a dashboard of well-being indicators and a conceptual framework for the Treasury that led to the launch of the world's first ever well-being budget in 2019 (New Zealand, Treasury 2019b). In Europe, Germany (Germany, Federal Government 2020), Iceland (Iceland, Prime Minister's Office 2019) and Scotland (Scotland, Scottish Government 2020) have all adopted well-being frameworks and indicators for public policy and spending assessment. Most recently, the Green Party in Ireland has published a paper as part of its campaign advocating for using well-being indicators to measure the welfare of the country (Green Party Ireland 2020). Perhaps due to the multitude of information offered by the literature, experts and the population, however, most national adaptations have focused on extended statistical dashboards despite the Commission's recommendations for a single summary measure that goes beyond population averages and captures information on multiple (joint) deprivations.

Overall, we might conclude that in well-being conversations since the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission, an increasing number of governments, organisations and academics have sought to measure well-being, broadly conceived. Yet as initiatives proliferate, there is not yet gathering consensus on what kinds of measures will be most intuitive, rigorous and policy salient. The recommendations from the report call for a multidimensional approach that captures the different components of well-being, and the need for disaggregated

data to understand variations within the population. It also identifies the importance of placing well-being at the centre of policy making, and including it in every stage of the process from agenda setting to policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (Stiglitz, Fitoussi and Durand 2018a, ch. 4).

2.2 Gross National Happiness Index of Bhutan

Among the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission's recommendations were that any measure of well-being should be multidimensional and incorporate a basic set of objective indicators capturing material living standards, health, education, the environment, personal activities including work, social connections, insecurity, political voice and governance; as well as subjective indicators of well-being concerned with cognitive evaluation, and positive and negative affect (Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi 2009). The Commission has also called on statistical offices to produce aggregate information on quality-of-life dimensions that allow for the construction of single, summary measures that are more tractable for policy than 'large eclectic dashboards' with uncertain priorities. In the United Kingdom, Allin and Hand voiced their concern that "without a single national well-being number, the hegemony of GDP will never successfully be challenged" (2016, p. 21), despite significant focus and investment in the measurement of various well-being indicators. To take us one step closer to complementing GDP as a leading national statistic and to address the concern mentioned above, this section presents the innovative approach of Bhutan's GNH Index to demonstrate the value added of a people-centred approach to multidimensional well-being measurement, and to illustrate how an MWI could permit policymakers to accurately assess and monitor disadvantages in the United Kingdom.

Preceding the report of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission and its focus on well-being as an alternative indicator of social progress, since the 1970s, the Royal Government of Bhutan has advanced the concept of gross national happiness. In 2008, it designed and launched the first official multidimensional index of human well-being, the GNH Index. That first national measure was followed by the first index disaggregated by *dzongkhag* (district), which revealed disparities in well-being across population groups and was used to elucidate policy responses by the Government of Bhutan (Ura et al. 2012). Besides simply measuring and monitoring well-being in the country, the GNH Index enables policymakers to accurately assess disadvantages along particular dimensions and among certain subgroups, and design policies that eliminate human suffering while simultaneously increasing quality of life and well-being. The index is introduced by Ura et al. (ibid., p. 8) as follows:

> One of several tools for public policies to advance GNH is an index of Gross National Happiness that enables policymakers to track progress across the different aspects of GNH. Caveats are natural: an index cannot include all aspects of GNH that are relevant. Nor is it sufficient to guide policy—it must be complemented by an in-depth, narrower analysis of policies and programmes, tailored to local realities. Further, it must be advanced by a plurality of institutions. Because advancing GNH depends upon actions by civil servants, government workers, the private sector, and civil society, the objective of maximising GNH must resonate with plural groups across Bhutanese civil service and society. So while an index alone is limited and insufficient, a robust and compelling index—rigorously formulated and clearly presented—can do what no other single tool can do, which is sketch roughly how GNH is evolving across Bhutan as a whole over time, as well as for different groups, regions and people. It can also convey *how* people are happier—or unhappier—than previously, and thus inform practical action.

Methodologically, the index uses a well-being application of the dual-cutoff methodology of Alkire and Foster (2011) to measure well-being in nine dimensions: good health, education, living standards, environmental diversity and resilience, good governance, time use, community vitality, cultural diversity and resilience, and psychological well-being. Since its initial publication, the GNH Index has been updated using data from 2010 and 2015. Levels and changes in the Index and its component indicators were analysed for each of Bhutan's 20 districts, as well as by gender, rural and urban areas, age and occupation between 2010 and 2015. Although descriptions of many of the policy activities that drew on this information have been published elsewhere,[4] a simple example might serve to illustrate the value added of a composite index that is decomposable by demographic characteristics and geographic regions, as well as broken down by indicators to allow for more refined analysis.

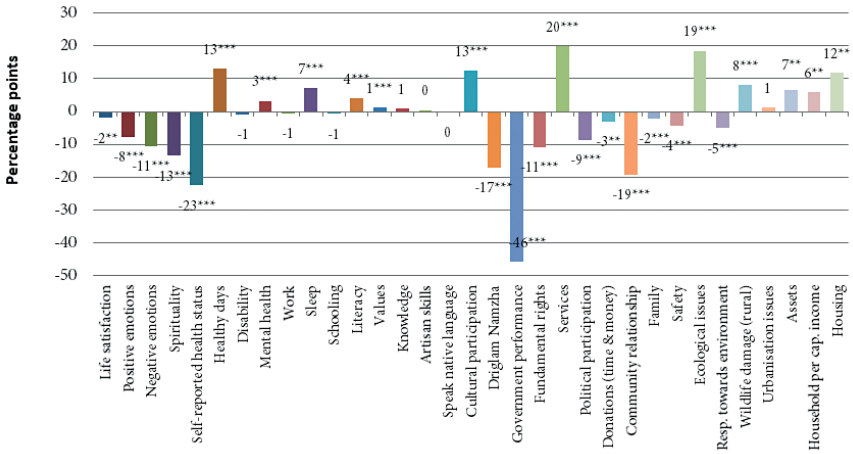
Figure 1 reports the absolute change in the percentage of people enjoying sufficiency in each of the indicators, while the relative changes are presented in Figure 2. The indicators with the highest improvements since 2010 were services under the governance domain, which increased 20 percentage points (49 percent), and ecological issues, which increased 19 percentage points (27 percent). In general, living standard, health and education indicators improved. The most prominent decreases in sufficiency level were in the perception of

[4] For examples of how GNH is used for policy formulation, see the GNH Screening Tool and the Gross National Happiness Commission.

government performance, which fell 46 percentage points (corresponding to a 58 percent reduction), followed by self-reported health status, which fell 23 percentage points. Note that changes in these indicators create only a small impact on the overall change in the GNH Index value because both indicators are subjective and have a lower weight.[5] All indicators of psychological well-being decreased, as did a few indicators under community vitality. Indicators that did not register any statistically significant change between 2010 and 2015 were disability, work, schooling, knowledge, artisan skills, speaking the native language and urbanisation issues.

The results from 2010-2015 show a society in rapid transition, with great gains in economic and social areas, but strains appearing in psychological and community domains. In the absence of the GNH Index, it would not be possible to see these diverging trends or to readily open a public discussion about priorities given these trends.

Figure 1. Absolute change in the percentage of people enjoying sufficiency

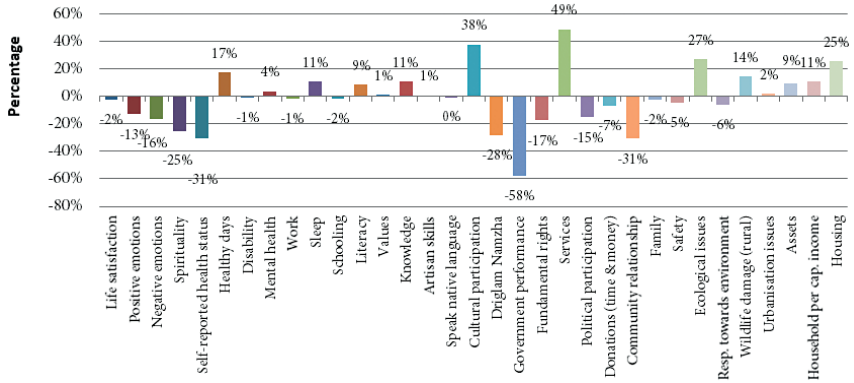


Note: *** statistically significant at 1 percent, ** statistically significant at 5 percent, * statistically significant at 10 percent.

Source: Ura et al. 2015.

[5] For more information on weights for GNH, see Ura et al. 2012. For a discussion of weights for subjective indicators, see the fourth section of this paper.

Figure 2. Relative change in the percentage of people enjoying sufficiency



Source: Ura et al. 2015.

2.3 Well-being in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, while Layard and others started a powerful discussion earlier mainly around the measurement of happiness, the policy shift towards well-being gained visibility in 2010 when a new Government announced a strategy and focus on well-being with the aim of "measuring our progress as a country, not just by how our economy is growing, but by how our lives are improving; not just by our standard of living, but by our quality of life" (Cameron 2010). Subsequent statistical strategies were developed to include well-being measures in national surveys and to use the information for evaluating existing and planned policies.[6] Institutionally, an independently functioning organisation, the What Works Centre for Well-being, was founded to publish guidance and research on well-being. Simultaneously, an independent Commission on Well-being and Policy was formed by the Legatum Institute; it included Martin Durand, Angus Deaton and Richard Layard, among others, and focused on advancing the debate on measurement of subjective well-being and its importance for public policy, with the final report of the Commission published in early 2014 (O'Donnell et al. 2014).

Beyond designing policies for the well-being of individuals and communities, the Government of the United Kingdom in 2010 announced plans for a

[6] See Fujiwara and Campbell 2011; United Kingdom, HM Treasury 2020.

national measurement agenda on well-being. While initially focused on exactly four subjective well-being indicators, the inability of those indicators to track changes and distinguish between different regions, plus the results of national consultations, led to the development of a national well-being dashboard by the Office for National Statistics. The framework reflected the national consultations on what well-being is, key themes, as well as purposes and uses for the new measure. Importantly, the consultation concluded that well-being is inherently multidimensional, and that no single, coherent definition exists among members of the public on what constitutes a 'good life' (United Kingdom, Office for National Statistics 2011). Initially presented in the form of a wheel, the national dashboard contains 10 domains and 41 indicators[7] (shown in Table 1) covering both subjective and objective aspects of well-being. The dashboard provides a richness of indicator detail, and avoids the need for data to be available for the same set of persons or households. Combining information at the individual, household and aggregate level across indicators, however, hinders the analysis of overlapping deprivations, while the mixing of achievements and deprivations makes it hard to get an overall understanding of the state of well-being across the population. The national measure thus aimed to assess "how we are doing as individuals and as a nation and how sustainable this is for the future" (United Kingdom, Office for National Statistics 2016). Yet while informative on specific indicators, it does not offer a summary statistics equivalent to GDP or other monetary measures of progress that would help elevate well-being to the same standing as indicators or economic growth. As of now, no well-being measures have saturated mainstream public and political discussion in the United Kingdom. Since the initial introduction of the measure in 2010, no subsequent governments, parties or politicians have directly taken on the issue of well-being as part of their political agenda and vision for the country.

Despite the lack of clear political development on the agenda, recent years have brought a renewed interest in measuring certain aspects of well-being in the United Kingdom. The release of a nationwide report on loneliness by the late Member of Parliament Jo Cox (Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness 2017) led to the appointment of a ministerial lead and a cross-country strategy to measure and combat loneliness, with the first annual report published in early 2020, and new loneliness indicators adapted for surveys (United Kingdom, HM Government 2018 and 2020b; What Works Wellbeing 2019). Devolved administrations in

[7] Note that two of the indicators, healthy life expectancy and physical safety, are reported separately for women and men, hence the reference to 43 indicators in some Office for National Statistics publications.

Scotland and Wales have further advanced the agenda on well-being over the last decade. In 2015, the Welsh Assembly adopted the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which includes seven well-being goals and places sustainable growth at the centre of governance and policymaking (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales 2020). In Scotland, a National Performance Framework was introduced in 2018 to move beyond GDP as a solitary measure of progress; it captures success using 81 indicators across 11 areas of life that reflect the shared values and aspirations of the population (Scotland, Scottish Government 2020).

In addition to governments and statistical offices, many civil society organisations[8] have presented new approaches to measuring quality of life in the United Kingdom, with examples ranging from individual to community level measures. These include the Thriving Places Index, which uses data from different government sources to create a dashboard at the local authority level; the Co-op Community Well-being Index, which measures well-being at the sub-local authority level (neighbourhoods) with a focus on relationships, people and place; the Index of Well-being in Later Life by the charity Age UK, an individual-level measure focused exclusively on people aged 60 and over and using data from a single survey; or the recently published Gross Domestic Wellbeing measure by the Carnegie Trust that uses data from the Office for National Statistics. To date, however, only a dashboard approach to measuring well-being has been used in an official capacity in the United Kingdom. More than data availability, the low uptake of multidimensional indices in national well-being measurement (in the United Kingdom and more broadly) might also reflect statisticians' presumptions that it is not possible to build an index with both credibility and policy salience.

This paper aims to present an alternative approach to existing measures of well-being. In line with the recommendations of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission, it develops an MWI for the United Kingdom as a policy tool. The next section outlines the methodology and innovative approach of Bhutan's GNH Index, then applies that method to the United Kingdom to create two alternative multidimensional indices that build on the official dashboard by the Office for National Statistics. The paper then presents the results at the national level and decomposed by age group, gender, geographical region and ethnicity, and provides an analysis of the joint distribution of deprivations and the contribution of each indicator to overall levels of well-being before closing

[8] There also exists many internationally comparable indices of quality of life including the Global Peace Index, Legatum Prosperity Index, Social Progress Index, World Happiness Index and the OECD Better Life Index, among others.

with a discussion of the public policy outcomes of the findings, and ideas for future research.

3. Methodology

To develop an MWI for the United Kingdom, this paper follows the innovative adaptation of the Alkire-Foster method by Bhutan, which constructs individual well-being profiles for each person, aggregated to a single score and divided into gradients to depict the levels of well-being across the population. The next section outlines: first, the basic principles of the Alkire-Foster method; second, the adaptation of the methodology for well-being measurement pioneered by Bhutan's GNH Index; and third, the formal notation for calculating the MWI for the United Kingdom.

3.1 Alkire-Foster method

The basic methodology is a counting-based approach to measuring multidimensional poverty and well-being, developed by Sabina Alkire and James Foster (2011). The method enables a rigorous and detailed analysis of multidimensional conditions; its most common application has been in the field of multidimensional poverty measurement.[9] The index can be tailored to each individual country context (or cross-country analysis) by selecting indicators, dimensions, weights and cut-offs that reflect the context and policy priorities, insofar as data permit. To identify populations of interest (e.g., who is poor) the Alkire-Foster method uses a dual cut-off approach. It first assesses whether a person's achievements fall short of a standard for each indicator using deprivation cut-offs. This creates a profile showing indicators in which each person's achievements fall short of the standard. A person's deprivations are summarized into a deprivation score showing the percentage of weighted indicators in which each person is deprived. Next, a cross-dimensional cut-off is applied that identifies individuals as multidimensionally poor (for example) if their deprivation score is equal to or greater than the poverty threshold. This identification process gives the headcount ratio (H), the percentage of people who are poor according to the index, and the intensity of their poverty (A), that is, the average weighted deprivation score among the poor. The adjusted headcount ratio (M0) or the MPI is the product of the two, calculated by multiplying incidence and intensity (M0 = H x A). By including intensity, the

[9] The most well-known application of the method is the global MPI developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and UNDP. It is used to measure acute poverty in over 100 developing countries. Other applications include regional, subgroup and national MPIs, many of which are used as official statistics.

M0 measure reflects any changes in deprivations and can differentiate between those above the cross-dimensional cut-off (Alkire and Foster 2011, Alkire et al. 2015).

Besides providing a single headline statistic that is at once able to capture any improvements or changes in deprivations, multidimensional indices based on the Alkire-Foster method feature multiple properties that make them useful tools for policymaking. Alkire-Foster indices can be decomposed by subgroups and geographical area, and broken down by indicator to provide more refined understanding of poverty among the population and highlight any inequalities in progress (Alkire and Robles 2016). This also provides incentives to policymakers to target the most deprived subgroups and areas of the population by focusing on particular deprivations identified by the index, and to monitor changes in poverty levels over time to ensure that the most vulnerable are not left behind. Further, the index can also be broken down to present the percentage of the population deprived in each of the indicators before and after applying the cross-dimensional cut-off. Thus, Alkire-Foster indices invite a focus on the deprivations experienced by the largest share of the poor, and allow for multi-agency responses that reflect the multiple overlapping deprivations captured by the measure. Lastly, the contribution of each indicator to overall poverty shows the deprivations that have the largest impact on people's lives, and can ameliorate agenda and priority setting among policy practitioners (Alkire and Foster 2011, Alkire et al. 2015).

3.2 Well-being application

Beyond its application to poverty measurement (see national and international measures such as the global MPI), the Alkire-Foster method is well-suited to measuring the well-being and happiness of the population using a multidimensional index (Alkire 2016). Deprivation in quality of life may be concentrated among poorer subgroups; for instance, the same people lacking sufficiency in good health might also be deprived in psychological well-being or employment. But loneliness or mental health challenges or sudden job loss may also strike population groups who were not poor at all before. Understanding the multiple overlapping deprivations people face can enable better policy responses with interventions and programmes designed to target multiple indicators at once. Indices based on the Alkire-Foster method have the advantage of presenting a summary headline figure that reflects the incidence and intensity of people's well-being (or poverty), while also conveying information on the joint distribution, as opposed to a dashboard, which simply presents the headcount

ratio for each indicator without providing an overarching picture of well-being across the population.

Bhutan's study of GNH introduced the first extension of the Alkire-Foster method to well-being measurement by reconceptualising the deprivation cut-offs and poverty cut-off(s), with the index reported in positive terms as (1 - M0) to reflect well-being rather than poverty (Alkire 2016). While the detailed methodology is presented in Ura et al. (2012), an abbreviated introduction is provided here to summarize the key methodological features of the index.

Sufficiency cut-offs were used to identify whether a person has sufficient achievement in a given indicator to create the 'causes and conditions' of happiness or whether they are deprived. Justification for the chosen cut-offs came from a variety of sources, such as international and national standards, value judgments and the findings of nationwide participatory studies (ibid., p. 28).

Weights for each indicator and domain were defined normatively, relying on a variety of information from technical and policy objectives (e.g., subjective indicators receiving smaller weights), to participatory exercises where respondents assigned weights based on their own opinions on what counts for well-being. Different weighting structures were tested to determine the robustness of the measures and any changes in the composition of indicators or the ranking of disaggregated subgroups, with results of the final weighting structure for the GNH Index published online to invite wider public discussion.

Happiness thresholds implemented in the GNH Index divide the society into 'gradients' or degrees of well-being. The index did not pretend to identify who is happy, but rather, who enjoys the causes and conditions of happiness that could be supported by public policy. As such, the happiness threshold permits diverse routes to happiness, and does not require sufficiency in absolutely every indicator. There is freedom of choice, of vocation and of leaving some paths untravelled.

The GNH Index is equal to **1–M0,** and mathematically, the percentage of people who are happy is (1–H), that is, 100 percent minus the headcount ratio of the associated M0. Dimensional content can be presented as the percentage of persons attaining sufficiency (to see what is going well) or the percentage lacking sufficiency (to see where policy actions are required).

The intuition of a well-being index, in comparison with an MPI using the Alkire-Foster method, is straightforward. Recall that in a poverty measure, a

deprivation threshold is set such that everyone whose achievements fall short of the deprivation cut-off is identified as deprived. In a well-being measure, 'sufficiency' cut-offs dichotomize the population into two groups, with a focus on those whose attainments are 'sufficient'. This simple shift of focus from the deprived to the non-deprived (with new terminology of sufficiency) extends to the computation of the sufficiency score and identification of the population who have attained different gradients of well-being. For each person, a sufficiency score is generated by summing the weighted indicators in which a person's achievements meet or exceed the sufficiency cut-off. A person's position in a well-being gradient is classified by comparing her or his sufficiency score to the overall happiness cut-off(s).

3.3 Calculating a Multidimensional Well-being Index

Following the example of the GNH Index, different well-being cut-offs are applied based on the weighting structure, dividing British society into five well-being gradients. The first cut off is set at 50 percent to identify those enjoying sufficiency in less than half of the weighted indicators **(low)**. The second cut-off identifies those enjoying **narrow** levels of well-being with sufficiency in 50 to 62.5 percent of indicators, while the third threshold identifies those with **moderate** levels of well-being and with sufficiency in 62.5 to 75 percent of the indicators. Next, those with a **decent** level of well-being and sufficiency in 75 to 87.5 percent of indicators are identified. The last gradient captures people who enjoy **high** levels of well-being and are sufficient in over 87.5 percent of the indicators.

The MWI for the United Kingdom is calculated by summing the percentage of people classified as enjoying favourable well-being levels (high or decent level) and the product of the percentage of people with less favourable well-being levels (moderate, narrow, low) multiplied by their average sufficiency. This gives a summary score for the MWI that ranges from 0 to 100, representing total well-being in the population. The simple equation follows as,

$$MWI = H^{F} + H^{LF} \times A^{LF}_{suff}$$

where,

H^{F} denotes the percentage of the population with favourable well-being

H^{LF} denotes the percentage of the population with less favourable well-being ($1-H^{F}$)

A^{LF}_{suff} denotes average sufficiency among the population with less favourable well-being.

The MWI presents an intuitive and simple summary score of well-being across the population while also being sensitive to changes in well-being and allowing the tracking of progress over time. By design, the index captures changes in both the incidence of those with favourable well-being and changes in the average sufficiency in the population with below-favourable well-being. Thus if any of the two values increase over time—that is, more people acquire favourable well-being or those with less favourable well-being acquire sufficiency in more dimensions—the MWI will also increase, making it easy to follow changes in well-being over time and analyse underlying patterns that led to or hindered progress.

4. Data and specifications

4.1 Data

Reflecting the joint distribution of achievements in different dimensions, Alkire-Foster indices usually rely on a single data set to construct all indicators, although merged data sets can also be used. To construct the MWI for the United Kingdom, a single data source was selected that covers many domains of well-being identified in the official national measure.[10] Data from the ninth wave of Understanding Society[11] permits identification at the individual level, and disaggregation of the results by age, ethnic group and gender to provide an analysis of intrahousehold dynamics. Running since 2010, Understanding Society, also known as the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Survey (UKHLS), is one of the largest panel surveys in the world. It incorporates 6,000 households from Wave 2 that were part of the British Household Panel Survey from 1991 to 2008. The UKHLS covers all four countries of the United Kingdom and collects data at the individual level from all ages, with each member of the household interviewed using a household questionnaire and specific questionnaires for children (under 10), youth (10-15), and adults (16 and over). The questionnaires contain core modules asked in each wave of the survey, with additional modules introduced on a periodical or one-off basis. The later waves

[10] While this exercise uses cross-sectional data, it is feasible to track changes in well-being over time using the MWI and panel data if data on all indicators are available across the waves. At the moment, some modules of Understanding Society are administered periodically, which prevents such analysis with the proposed index structure.

[11] University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, NatCen Social Research, Kantar Public 2019.

of Understanding Society also feature an ethnic minority and immigrant boost sample that permits disaggregation of the results by ethnicity. The survey is representative by region, area and country, as well as by age group and gender, permitting disaggregated analysis of inequalities.

The fieldwork for each wave of Understanding Society covers a nearly two-year period, with households sampled on a rolling basis each month.[12] The Wave 9 data were collected from January 2017 to May 2019 and contain information for nearly 25,000 households and 50,000 adults aged 16 and over, and an additional 12,000 children and youth. Besides the general questions, the special modules included in Wave 9 (and conducted every two years) address social care, discrimination and harassment, exercise and nutrition, family networks, parents and children, and child maintenance. Four additional modules (repeated every three years) are also included, asking respondents about neighbourhood conditions, membership in groups and organisations, social networks, and news and media use. Finally, Wave 9 also includes self-completed questionnaires on neighbourhood belonging, sexual orientation, political engagement and an event-specific questionnaire on the 2017 general election.

The MWI uses information from individuals aged 16 and over from all available samples, including the ethnic minority and immigrant boost sample. The indicators rely on information from both the household and individual adult questionnaires, including the self-completion questionnaire module. Due to this requirement, the analysis includes individuals who have successfully completed all three interviews. Respondents who did not complete all three questionnaires were not considered.[13] Additionally, since the MWI captures data on all indicators for each person, those with missing information on one or more of the indicators were excluded from the estimation.[14] Note that for this academic exercise we used the same sample for both measures to facilitate comparison; if

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[12] More detail on the survey design and sampling frame and method is available at the website of The UK Understanding Society Household Longitudinal Study.

[13] This includes respondents who only completed the household grid and not the questionnaire (884 observations), or did not complete the self-completion module (2,363 observations) due to refusal (839 observations), inability to complete (443 observations), missing (4 observation) or proxy (1,077 observations).

[14] Respondents with 'truly missing values' (missing, refusal, don't know) are excluded from the final analytical sample. Meanwhile, individuals who were not asked the question (inapplicable) are considered sufficient by default as they could not be assessed. Table B1 in Appendix B lists the missing values for all indicators prior to constructing the final sample.

one was selected, the sample size would increase as fewer indicators would be considered.

The estimation uses the cross-sectional weights included by the data providers, which in the case of Understanding Society contain zero weights for parts of the final sample. Documentation for the survey states that zero weights are assigned either by sample design or as a result of fieldwork issuing rules.[15] The estimation excludes individuals who are assigned zero weights, thus the final analytical sample for the MWI consists of N=26,508 individuals aged 16 and over. Of the weighted final sample, 54.6 percent of participants were surveyed in 2017, 41.4 percent in 2018 and a smaller 4 percent in the first half of 2019.

The survey allows for results to be decomposed by age group, gender, region, area and ethnicity among others[16]. The analysis uses the collapsed five category ethnicity breakdown (also used by the Office for National Statistics[17]) containing the categories of: (i) White (British, English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, Irish, Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Any other White background); (ii) Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups (White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background) ; (iii) Asian or Asian British (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Any other Asian background); (iv) Black, African, Caribbean or Black British (African, Caribbean, Any other Black, African or Caribbean background); and (v) Other ethnic group (Arab, Any other ethnic group). The paper also presents analysis by a collapsed two category, comparing results among (i) people of white background and (ii) people belonging to all other ethnic groups combined[18]. Age group disaggregation uses the variable available in the data that dissects the sample into seven different age

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15 Some temporary sample members, and non-eligible members living in households with individuals sampled for the ethnic minority and immigrant boost samples are assigned zero weights. Additionally, as opposed to being dropped from the sample, households that missed previous waves are still issued fieldwork to prevent attrition. Those that missed a previous wave receive zero longitudinal weights, and subsequently zero cross-sectional weights since those are derived from longitudinal weights. This is the case for the analysis presented here, with all 4,800 individuals with zero cross-sectional weights also having zero longitudinal weights. For more information on weights and sampling, see Q. 13 on p. 11 of the 'Weighting and sample representation: Frequently asked questions' by Kaminska and Lynn 2019.

16 University of Essex, Institute for Social and Economic Research, NatCen Social Research, Kantar Public 2019.

17 See list of ethnic groups.

18 The category 'White' includes people from a White background (including White minorities), and the category 'All other ethnic groups' includes people from Mixed/ Multiple ethnic group, Asian/Asian British, Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, and Other ethnic group background.

groups: 16–19 (since children and youth are omitted), 20–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60–69, and 70 years and over. Gender disaggregation is by female and male categories. Regional disaggregation follows the 12 government regions, while disaggregation by place of residence distinguishes between urban and rural parts of the country. The sample size for each disaggregation is shown in Table 4, and Table A1 in Appendix A.

4.2 Building a Multidimensional Well-being Index (MWI)

The proposed MWI for the United Kingdom takes its starting point from the Measure of National Well-being Dashboard of the Office for National Statistics, shown in Table 1, which presents information on 10 domains of well-being. The dashboard collates data from multiple sources including Understanding Society for 11 out of the 41 indicators. As data for some indicators are only collected periodically, however, it combines information from various data sets ranging from 2013 to 2017 to construct the indicators.

Table 1. Measures of National Well-being Dashboard

Personal well-being	Our relationships	Health	What we do	Where we live
Life satisfaction Worthwhile Happiness Anxiety Population mental well-being	Unhappy relationships Loneliness People to rely on	Healthy life expectancy Disability Health satisfaction Depression or Anxiety	Unemployment rate Job satisfaction Satisfaction with amount of leisure time Volunteering Art and culture participation Sports participation	Crime Feeling safe Accessed natural environment Belonging to neighbourhood Access to key services Satisfaction with accommodation
Personal finance	**Economy**	**Education and skills**	**Governance**	**Environment**
Low income Household wealth Household income Satisfaction with household income Difficulty managing financially	Disposable income Public sector debt Inflation	Human capital Not in education, employment or training (NEET) No qualifications	Voter turnout Trust in government	Greenhouse gas emissions Protected areas Renewable energy Household recycling

Source: United Kingdom, Office for National Statistics, 2019a.

Additionally, the dashboard combines information across multiple levels with some indicators, such as those relating to personal well-being or relationships, referring to individual conditions with variation across the population, while indicators under the domain of the economy or environment capture macro

conditions that do not vary across groups or relate directly to individual well-being.

To remedy these issues and ensure that the unit of analysis is consistent across the indicators, the MWI considers a subset of 41 indicators and 10 domains outlined in the dashboard for which information is available from a single data source, Wave 9 of Understanding Society. The two trial MWIs retain or approximate 21 of the original 41 indicators to a degree that is sufficient for an illustrative academic study, and add a further five new indicators. Some limitations remain due to data constraints, mainly around the domains of environment, where we live, what we do, as well as education and skills, for which data were not available or only periodically collected as part of the Understanding Society survey. Future work will aim to explore alternative indicators to capture these aspects of well-being using additional waves, as well as exploring new data sources with the aim to present improved indicators that replicate well-being as understood by the public and implemented in the national measure.

Bearing in mind these restrictions, a total of 25 indicators were created for the index, grouped into eight dimensions, and shown in Table 2 (and Figures 3a and 3b). The number of indicators used in these measures (25 and 22) is higher than any official multidimensional poverty index, but lower than the number used by Bhutan (33 indicators) and serves to open this conversation. Because the number and content of some indicators differ from the Office for National Statistics dashboard, the precise dimensional groups and indicators could not be replicated. Instead, multiple trial measures were considered, testing different hypotheses and weighting structures, and the sensitivity of the index to subjective well-being questions. Table 2 (and Figures 3a and 3b) shows the indicators and dimensions for two illustrative trial measures alongside the selected weights. Measure 1 is the closest approximation of the Office for National Statistics dashboard, with satisfaction questions distributed throughout the different dimensions, and questions on psychological well-being grouped in the personal well-being dimension. Measure 2 groups all of the satisfaction questions (with self-reported health instead of health satisfaction) in a personal well-being dimension, and has fewer indicators in the what we do, education and personal finance dimensions, because those indicators focus on objective aspects of well-being such as unemployment or low income.

Table 2. Multidimensional Well-being Index (Measures 1 and 2)

Dimension	Measure 1		Measure 2	
	Indicator	Weight	Indicator	Weight
Personal well-being	Life satisfaction	1/32	Life satisfaction	1/40
	Worthwhile	1/32	Job satisfaction	1/40
	Unhappiness	1/32	Satisfaction with leisure time	1/40
	Anxiety	1/32	Satisfaction with income	1/40
			Self-reported health	1/40
Our relationships	Unhappy relationships	1/32	Unhappy relationships	1/32
	Loneliness	1/32	Loneliness	1/32
	Social networks	1/32	Social networks	1/32
	Neighbourhood belonging	1/32	Neighbourhood belonging	1/32
Health	Disability	1/48	Disability	1/40
	Limited activity	1/48	Limited activity	1/40
	Self-reported health	1/48	Evidence of depression (GHQ)	1/40
	Evidence of depression	1/48	Fruit and vegetable consumption	1/40
	Fruit and vegetable consumption	1/48	Exercise	1/40
	Exercise	1/48		
What we do	Unemployment	6/64	Unemployment	1/8
	Job satisfaction	1/64		
	Satisfaction with leisure time	1/64		
Education	No A level or equivalent	1/8	No A level or equivalent	1/8

Personal Finance	Low income	6/64	Low income	7/64
	Satisfaction with income	1/64	Difficulty with finances	1/64
	Difficulty with finances	1/64		
Living standards	Adequate heating	1/16	Adequate heating	1/16
	Housing tenure	1/16	Housing tenure	1/16
Governance	Voting	1/16	Voting	1/16
	Political efficacy	1/16	Political efficacy	1/16

Source: Authors' original study.

It may be appropriate to clarify the use of subjective indicators. As articulated above, it seems entirely appropriate for a measure of well-being to include a dimension of subjective well-being comprising indicators of satisfaction, positive and negative affect, and meaning. Amartya Sen (2009) argued that happiness should be considered important functioning alongside other functionings, and indeed Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi (2009) listed subjective well-being as one of the dimensions of quality of life. However, there are a number of well-known difficulties in accurately measuring and interpreting trends in subjective well-being, however, ranging from adaptive preferences (Graham 2010, Clark 2012), to the influence of extraversion and optimism, and the issue of frames of reference and even the placement of the questions in the survey. For that reason, this paper trials two well-being measures that differ, in particular, in their treatment of subjective data.

Weighting for the indicators and dimensions also varies slightly between the two structures. Being a dashboard, the Office for National Statistics' national measure does not assign weights to the domains and indicators. Furthermore, the nationwide consultation preceding the work on the dashboard found a variation in what people considered most important to their well-being (United Kingdom, Office for National Statistics 2011). Since no large-scale participatory exercise was carried out as part of this study, the proposed weighting structure is justified normatively. In both indices, each dimension is equally weighted while subjective indicators within a dimension receive a smaller weight compared to objective indicators. This step ensures that trends in well-being over time are not overly influenced by subjective indicators. There are two reasons for this. First, these indicators also have short recall periods (e.g., "How happy did you

feel yesterday?"), and are therefore subject to potential fluctuation. Second, the trends could change because of a change in the frame of reference rather than in the underlying condition.

In Measure 1, each dimension receives a weight of one eighth, and subjective well-being indicators are allocated one eighth of the dimensional weight, with all weights across the indicators and dimensions adding up to one. The second index maintains equal weights across dimensions; however, the grouped satisfaction indicators under the personal well-being dimension receive equal nested weights, and a smaller weight for subjective well-being indicators applies in the personal finance dimension.

The next section outlines the sufficiency cut off for each indicator, based on information from the national dashboard as well as the wider literature on the United Kingdom and the set of objective and subjective indicators recommended for well-being measurement (Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi 2009). Additional information on the questions and definitions, and a more detailed description of the coding for each indicator is presented below, while missing values for each final indicator are presented in Appendix B alongside results of the redundancy analysis.

Personal well-being

Guidelines focusing on subjective well-being indicators identify three measurement strategies: *life evaluation,* covering satisfaction with income, health and work; *affect or experience*, capturing momentary emotions and feelings such as happiness or kindness, or anger or worry; and *eudaemonic well-being*, encompassing deeper and psychological processes such as meaning and purpose, autonomy or competence that focus on the realisation of one's potential (Dolan, Layard and Metcalfe 2011, OECD 2013). Stone and Krueger (2018) broaden this categorisation to evaluative measures, experimental measures and eudaemonia, while also extending the conceptualisation of affect or hedonistic well-being to include pain and misery, which they argue form significant parts of people's momentary emotions.

As an indicator, life satisfaction provides a general evaluation of one's life with regards to health, education, relationships, work and others. For the question on life satisfaction, respondents answered on a scale of 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 7 (completely satisfied), and those who said they are completely or mostly satisfied (6 or 7) with their lives were considered to experience sufficient life satisfaction.

Eudaemonia is captured by General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) questions on feeling worthwhile and playing a useful role. For the first question, respondents are asked: "Have you recently been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?" with answers ranging from "not at all" (1) to "much more than usual" (4). Those with a score of 1 were considered to meet the sufficiency cut-off for feeling worthwhile. As the Office for National Statistics question refers to feelings of worth related to things a person does, we have combined the question of "believe worthwhile" with a second GHQ question on "playing a useful role", which ranges from 1 (more so than usual) to 4 (much less than usual). Those who have answered "more than" (1) or "same as usual" (2) were considered to meet the sufficiency threshold. The final indicator combines information on the two variables, and considers a person to be insufficient if they have felt worthless OR less useful than normal. This captures both feelings that are deeper and more prolonged, as well as momentary feelings of being less useful that could result from changes in circumstances or activities in a person's life.

The remaining indicators in the dimension capture affect, both positive and negative, measured by questions on unhappiness and anxiety. While the Office for National Statistics uses an indicator on happiness, the decision was made to replace this with the question on unhappiness and depression as the emotions of happiness (positive affect) and unhappiness (negative affect) are not polar opposites, and are therefore best kept separate when constructing an index. Given the choice of indicators in the dimension, the negative affect, asking participants if they felt unhappy or depressed, was selected. Those who answered "not at all" (1) were considered to have sufficiency, while people saying they felt unhappy or depressed "no more than usual" (2), "rather more than usual" (3) or "much more than usual" (4) are classed as being insufficient.

While there is no specific question on anxiety, the indicator was recreated using information from two variables in the GHQ: being constantly under strain and loss of sleep. Those who have answered "not at all" to both questions were considered to have sufficient equanimity. Those reporting feeling constantly under pressure or losing sleep "no more than usual", "rather more than usual", and "more than usual" are considered to enjoy insufficient peace of mind.

Our relationships

Self-reported happiness with one's relationship taps concepts of social connectedness, trust and happiness. Respondents who are married, in civil partnerships or living as a couple are asked to rate their happiness with the relationship on a scale of 1 (extremely unhappy) to 7 (perfect). In line with the

Office for National Statistics dashboard, the indicator considers those reporting they are "extremely unhappy" (1) or "fairly unhappy" (2) with a relationship to be insufficient. Unmarried individuals, and widowed, divorced or separated partners are not asked the question and are therefore considered sufficient by default.

The second indicator in the dimension focuses on loneliness, a key measure of subjective well-being and social relations. The questions included in Wave 9 of Understanding Society were developed as part of a government initiative to establish appropriate indicators for measurement that can inform policy debates on tackling loneliness across all age groups. The indicator for the MWI considers the indirect questions on loneliness included in the survey and was constructed following the guidance published by the Office for National Statistics (2018) and the What Works Centre for Well-being (2019), albeit with some modifications to fit the selected methodology. The indirect questions come from the three-item scale from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) that asks respondents how often they feel left out, isolated or feel a lack companionship, while the direct question asks how often they feel lonely. Answers range from 1 (hardly ever) to 3 (often) for all four questions. The three indirect questions are scored according to the guidance by Office for National Statistics (2018). While it simply uses the mean score from the UCLA scale to track changes in loneliness over time, the MWI applies a sufficiency cut-off, with a score of 4 and above constituting insufficiency (thus, only those answering "hardly ever" to all three questions are considered to have sufficiently avoided loneliness).

While there were no available data to recreate the Office for National Statistics indicator of 'someone to rely on' in the ninth wave of Understanding Society, the data set contains questions relating to the number of close friends that can be used to proxy social support networks, but not as an exact match for the Office for National Statistics indicator. To extend the scope of the indicator, information on signs of social ties and support networks was included (whether individuals respond that they regularly talk to their neighbours or can borrow items from them). For the final indicator, those who do not talk regularly with their neighbours or cannot borrow from them, and have less than three close friends were considered to have insufficient social support networks.

Given that the information for the 'where we live' dimension was limited, the indicator relating to community ties was moved to the dimension of our relationships. The question on belonging to the neighbourhood is used to construct an indicator that captures trust and cohesion in one's close surroundings. Respondents were asked to rate to what extent they agree that

they belong to their neighbourhood, with answers ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Those who agree (1 or 2) are considered to meet the sufficiency cut-off, while those who neither agree nor disagree (3) and those who disagree (4 or 5) are considered insufficient in community ties.

Health

The disability indicator in the Office for National Statistics dashboard is constructed in line with the Government Statistical Services guidelines[19] and includes two questions for the population aged 16 to 64 years. According to this criterion, disability is defined as a 'long-term' and 'substantial' physical or mental impairment affecting one's ability to carry out normal daily activities. The data in the latest wave of Understanding Society have been designed in line with the government guidance, with respondents asked about conditions that have lasted for at least 12 months or that are likely to continue over 12 months or more. The follow-up questions ask all respondents whether they have substantial difficulties with one of the following: mobility; lifting, carrying or moving objects; manual dexterity; continence; hearing; sight; communication or speech; memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; recognising when you are in physical danger; your physical coordination; difficulties with own personal care; other health problem or disability; or none of the above. In order to fulfil the 'substantial' element of the government definition, individuals who have reported a disability (answered yes to the first question) and have mentioned one of the listed conditions in the second question are identified as living with disabilities. Those aged 65 or over are considered to meet the sufficiency cut-off.

Additionally, two of the physical components from the SF-12 questionnaire[20] included in Wave 9 are considered for assessing limits to physical activity for the whole population. The questions are asked with a four-week recall period with respondents assessing to what extent their health limits them in moderate activities (such as moving a table, pushing a vacuum cleaner, bowling or playing golf) or in climbing several flights of stairs. Those who are not limited in either are considered to enjoy sufficient well-being, while those expressing limitation with one or both activities are considered to be insufficient. Further, while the data for health satisfaction are available, the decision was made to include self-reported health for a more direct assessment of personal health, without the

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[19] See Smith 2019.

[20] SF is a short 12-item questionnaire designed to capture health and quality of life based on the Medical Outcomes Study. For information on the questions, see Ware, Kosinski and Keller 1996.

additional, subjective assessment of satisfaction. Answers range from excellent (1) to poor (5). Those reporting fair or poor self-reported health are considered insufficient in the indicator.

To capture evidence of depression, the MWI considers two different indicators used for each of the structures presented below. The first indicator is constructed using a question from the SF-12 item scale, asking respondents whether they have felt down or depressed during the last four weeks. Answers range from "all of the time" (1) to "none of the time" (5). Respondents who have stated that they feel down or depressed "all" or "most of the time" (1 or 2) are considered to lack sufficiency. Alternatively, the second indicator relies on information from the 12-item GHQ, designed to capture the current mental state of respondents by asking if it differs from their usual state. Although wording may depend on the questions, answers feature five values: much more/more, same as usual, less/much less OR much better/better, same as usual, worse/much worse. The Understanding Society data set provides two variables that aggregate results from the 12-item GHQ: a Likert-scale ranging from 0 (least depressed) to 36 (most depressed), and a Caseness scale ranging from 0 (least depressed) to 12 (most depressed).[21] To indicate evidence of depression, the MWI relies on the second variable where individual items are scored on a scale of 1 to 4. The combined Caseness score is then calculated "by recoding 1 and 2 values on individual variables to 0, and 3 and 4 values to 1, and then summing, giving a scale running from 0 (the least distressed) to 12 (the most distressed)" (ISER 2019). In line with the Office for National Statistics measure, the indicator considers those with a score of 4 or more to lack sufficient well-being because they exhibit signs of mild to moderate depression and/or anxiety.

To assess the general health of British society, we include two additional indicators related to healthy diet and exercise. Following the nutritional guidance by the National Health Service (2018a, 2018b) and using information on fruit and vegetable consumption, those who do not consume at least five portions of fruit and/or vegetables every day are considered to fall below the sufficiency threshold for the nutrition indicator. Further, Wave 9 includes data on time spent doing physical exercise during a week. By using the question on minutes and hours of vigorous or moderate activities and following national guidelines on physical activity (National Health Service 2019), those with less

[21] For information on the questions, see Goldberg et al. 1997.

than 150 minutes of moderate intensity or less than 75 minutes of vigorous intensity exercise per week are considered to lack sufficient well-being.

What we do

While the Office for National Statistics dashboards include the rate of unemployment (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the economically active population), this analysis considers this deprivation at the level of the individual and assesses whether a person is unemployed. In line with the definition of unemployment used by the Office for National Statistics (2020b), people aged 16 to 64 who did not complete any paid work during the last week (and who are otherwise not in paid employment) and are available to start a new position in the next two weeks, and have actively looked for work in the last four weeks are considered to be deprived, as well those individuals who are out of work and waiting to start a job. Those aged 65 or over are not considered to lack sufficient employment. As mentioned later, this indicator may need to be improved.

The last two indicators of the dimension match those indicators in the Office for National Statistics dashboard and concern satisfaction with job and satisfaction with amount of leisure time. Similarly to the life satisfaction questions, answers are given on a seven-item scale with values ranging from 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 7 (completely satisfied), For both indicators, those not mostly (6) or completely satisfied (7) are considered to be insufficient.

Personal finance

For the income indicator, data on household disposable income (after tax) are equivalized according to the modified-OECD scale. The Household Below Average Income reports published by the Department for Work and Pensions define income poverty in the United Kingdom as follows: "A household is said to be in relative low income if their equivalised income is below 60 percent of median income" (United Kingdom, Department for Work and Pensions 2020). Income values are adjusted for inflation using the consumer prices index, deflating them to January 2017 prices based on data from the Office for National Statistics.[22] This is followed by a calculation of the poverty line, and the final indicator considers individuals living in households with income below this line to lack a sufficient level of well-being.

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[22] See the Office's consumer price inflation tables.

Satisfaction with income is coded similarly to the life satisfaction indicator with those "not completely" (7) or "mostly satisfied" (6) considered as insufficient. Additionally, the indicator assessing difficulty with finances is included in the index, with answers to one's subjective financial situation ranging from "living comfortably" (1) to "finding it very difficult to get by" (5). Those who report to be "just about getting by" (3) or finding it "quite difficult" (4) or "very difficult" (5) to get by are considered to meet the sufficiency cut-off.

Living Standards

Besides the Office for National Statistics measures, two new indicators on tenure and heating are added to the MWI. Home ownership has been linked to changes in inequality (Causa, Woloszko and Leite 2019), and the issue is at the core of the political and economic agenda in the United Kingdom. The idea of a home is one closely linked to well-being and life satisfaction (United Kingdom, Office for National Statistics 2019b). Feelings of anxiety and depression have been shown to be affected by the instability of housing conditions (McPhillips 2017). For the tenure indicator, respondents are considered to be sufficient if they own their house outright or with a mortgage, and insufficient if living in local authority rented, housing association rented, rented from employer, rented private (unfurnished), rented private (furnished) or other rented accommodation. Lastly, adequate heating is added as a new indicator that strongly underpins physical and mental well-being, with individuals who are not able to heat their homes adequately during winter considered as insufficient. Individuals to whom this question did not apply are considered to meet the sufficiency cut-off.

Education

The education indicator considers those aged 16 to 64 with below A level qualifications as having insufficient levels of well-being, a stricter measure than the Office for National Statistics specification, which only considers people without any qualifications as deprived in education. In the Understanding Society survey, respondents are asked to list their highest qualification, comprising degrees, A levels, technical qualifications, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE and equivalents) or qualifications gained abroad. Respondents 16 to 64 with a highest qualification below A level[23] are considered

[23] Based on the hiqual_dv variable, the following categories were considered insufficient: GCSE/O level, Ordinary/Standard Grade (if no higher qualification was obtained), GNVQ/GSVQ", "NVQ/SVQ Level 1-2, CSE, other school leaving exam certificate or matriculation, key skills (if no higher qualification was obtained), basic skills (if no higher qualification was obtained), entry level qualifications (Wales) (if no higher qualification was obtained), RSA/OCR/Clerical and commercial

to have insufficient education. Those aged 65 or over are considered to meet the sufficiency cut-off.

Governance

While Wave 9 of Understanding Society contains data on voting, the question, "Did you vote in this (past) year's general election?", was only issued to those interviewed after the 2017 general election and who were issued a sample between June 2017 and May 2018. This means that a large number of people were not asked the question, making the non-applicable population (by default considered sufficient) quite large. Nevertheless, the index includes this indicator as a proxy of governance. Additionally, while trust in government is included as an indicator in the Office for National Statistics dashboard, this information is not available in the Wave 9 data. To proxy citizens' trust in government upholding their interests, and their belief in the extent to which they can influence political affairs, two questions (out of four) on **political efficacy** are added to the index. Respondents are asked to rate to what extent they agree or disagree with the following statements: "Public officials don't care much about what people like me think" and "People like me don't have any say in what the government does." Responses range from "strongly agree" (1) to "strongly disagree" (5). For both questions, those who have agreed (1 or 2) with the statements are considered insufficient, and those who "neither agree or disagree" (3), "disagree" (4) or "strongly disagree" (5) are considered to be sufficient. The final variable considers a person insufficient if they have low self-perceived efficacy in one or both of the variables, proxying dissatisfaction and disengagement with politics.

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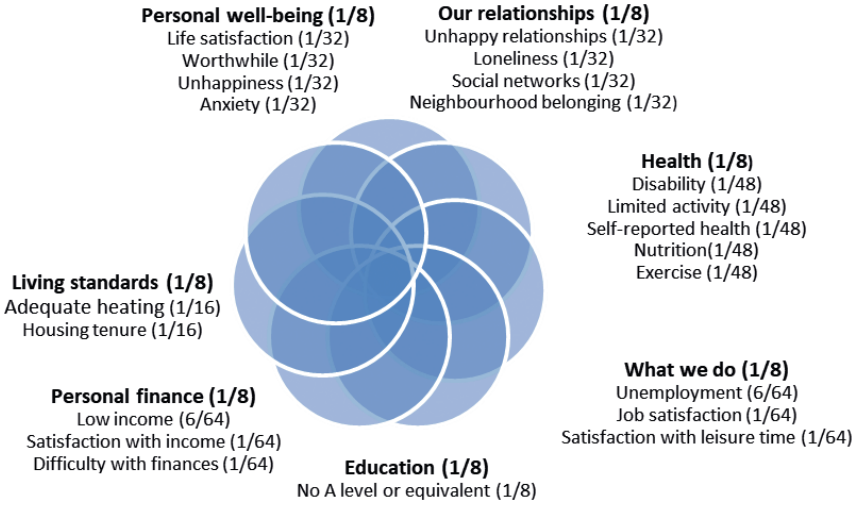
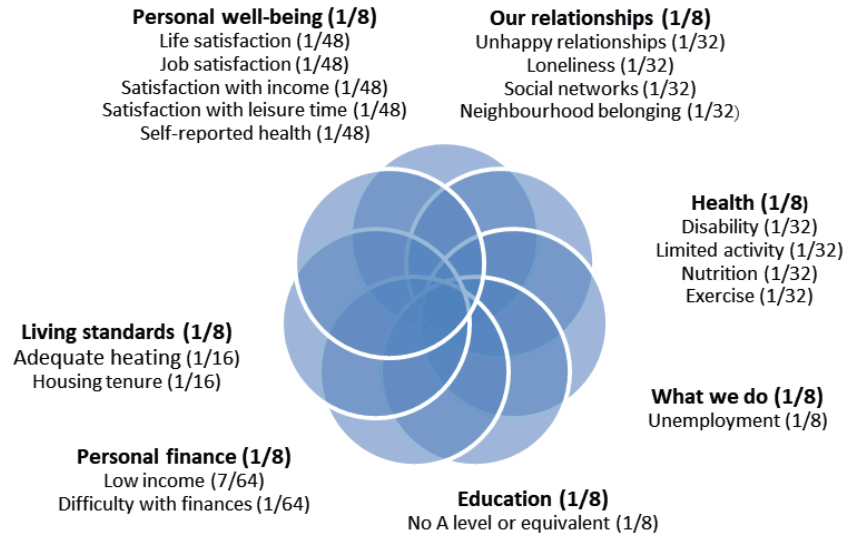
qualifications (e.g., typing/shorthand/bookkeeping/commerce), City and Guilds Certificate, other vocational, and technical or professional qualification.

Figure 3a and 3b. Multidimensional Well-being Index

Measure 1



Measure 2



Source: Authors' original study.

5. Results

5.1. Comparing Two Trial Well-being Measures

Table 3 below presents the headline results for the population from the two proposed measures. Multiple cut-offs are used to construct five well-being gradients. The *incidence* shows the proportion of people across each of the five well-being gradients, while *average sufficiency* gives the share of dimensions for which a person enjoys sufficiency, broken down by the five gradients. It also presents a dichotomous classification based on average sufficiency, with those enjoying sufficiency in at least three quarters of the weighted indicators classified as having favourable well-being, and people who fall short of this classed as enjoying less favourable well-being.

Overall, the results show a roughly equal split of the population into those enjoying favourable levels of well-being () – with sufficiency in at least three quarters of the weighted indicators, and those with less favourable levels of well-being (), who enjoy sufficiency in less than 75 percent of the indicators. Breaking the results into five gradients shows that although more than 44 percent of the population falls under favourable well-being, this is largely composed of people with decent as opposed to the highest level of well-being according to the MWI. Worryingly, narrow well-being has the second highest incidence across both measures, and although the percentage of people with the lowest level of well-being is small, they are sufficient in only 43 percent of the indicators on average. The results vary slightly between the two measures, with more people enjoying favourable well-being according to Measure 2, which groups the satisfaction questions in the personal well-being dimension.

Table 3. Incidence and average sufficiency across the five well-being gradients

Well-being gradient	Sufficient in...	Insufficient in...	Incidence		Average sufficiency	
			Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 1	Measure 2
Favourable	**75% – 100%**		**44%**	**51%**	**84%**	**84%**
High	87.5% – 100%	1/8 or less	13%	16%	92%	92%
Decent	75% – 87.49%	More than 1/8	31%	35%	81%	80%
Less favourable	**0% – 74.99%**		**56%**	**49%**	**62%**	**64%**
Moderate	67.50% – 74.99%	More than 1/4	20%	21%	71%	71%
Narrow	50% – 67.49%	More than 3/8	30%	24%	60%	61%
Low	0 %– 49.99%	More than 1/2	6%	4%	43%	43%

Source: Authors' calculations.

The MWI can be calculated by summing two numbers: (1) the percentage of people with favourable well-being, and (2) the product of the percentage of those with less favourable well-being multiplied by the average sufficiency among the not yet happy. This gives in an MWI of 0.790 for Measure 1 and an MWI of 0.824 for Measure 2. By combining information on the happy, who are treated as having achieved sufficiency across all indicators, and the not yet happy, whose sufficiency is captured for the MWI, the index provides an intuitive summary score that is also responsive to changes in incidence or average sufficiency. Thus, the MWI will increase if either the proportion of people with favourable well-being (happy) increases, or the average sufficiency of those with less favourable well-being (not yet happy) increases. These qualities mean that the MWI presents itself as a useful tool for tracking happiness of the population over time and provides different avenues for improving human well-being.

Additionally, national results for the MWI can be decomposed by different population subgroups to reveal disparities in well-being. The next sections dig deeper into the composition of well-being and the disparities across the population to provide a detailed picture of the well-being landscape in the United Kingdom. The analysis explores the variation in well-being levels across subgroups of the population and areas of the country, followed by a presentation of indicator-level results of the MWI and an analysis of the form and composition

of well-being in the United Kingdom. Lastly, the paper offers a brief comparison with life satisfaction before setting out a roadmap with suggestions for the use of the measure and improving wellbeing with public policy.

5.2 Who Enjoys Well-being?

Table 4 presents the key findings from the disaggregated analysis, including the MWI and its subsequent statistics by age, gender, ethnicity and place of residence using results from Measure 2.[24] The findings shed light on piercing internal inequalities and demographic patterns that have cross-cutting impacts on well-being in the United Kingdom. The results from this analysis illustrate the importance of decomposition for any national well-being measure.

[24] The disaggregated results for Measure 1 can be found in Table A1 of Appendix A.

Table 4. Headlines figures for MWI (using Measure 2)[25]

Disaggregation	MWI	H^f (%)	H^{lf} (%)	AS^f (%)	AS^{lf} (%)	Population share (weighted, %)	Sample size (weighted)
National	0.824	51	49	84	64	100.0	26,501
Urban	0.814	49	51	84	64	75.5	19,999
Rural	0.854	59	41	85	65	24.5	6,502
16-19	0.851	59	41	85	64	5.8	1,549
20-29	0.768	37	63	82	63	13.0	3,434
30-39	0.760	35	65	82	63	13.9	3,684
40-49	0.789	42	58	83	64	15.8	4,175
50-59	0.800	46	54	83	63	18.3	4,842
60-69	0.874	64	36	86	65	15.4	4,080
70 years and older	0.919	75	25	86	68	17.9	4,744
North East	0.803	47	53	84	63	4.4	1,167
North West	0.827	52	48	84	64	11.3	2,985
Yorkshire and Humber	0.823	51	49	84	64	8.8	2,324
East Midlands	0.846	57	43	84	64	7.7	2,029
West Midlands	0.819	50	50	84	64	8.8	2,320
East England	0.833	54	46	85	64	9.8	2,586
London	0.789	42	58	83	63	11.2	2,959
South East	0.831	53	47	85	64	13.7	3,620
South West	0.836	54	46	85	64	8.9	2,346
Wales	0.830	54	46	84	63	4.7	1,232

[25] Results for some disaggregated groups with small sample size require further verification. Thus, the results should be interpreted as illustrative findings with that notion in mind.

Scotland	0.824	51	49	84	64	8.3	2,193
Northern Ireland	0.826	51	49	84	64	2.8	740
Men	0.829	53	47	84	64	47.9	12,689
Women	0.819	50	50	84	64	52.1	13,819
White	0.830	53	47	84	64	92.7	24,530
Mixed/ Multiple ethnic groups	0.752	35	65	83	62	1.2	321
Asian/ Asian British	0.771	38	62	83	63	4.1	1,081
Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British	0.713	27	73	81	61	1.6	429
Other ethnic group	0.692	26	74	83	58	0.4	113
White	0.830	53	47	84	64	92.7	24,530
All other ethnic groups combined	0.751	35	65	82	62	7.3	1,944

Source: Authors' calculations.

Disaggregating the results by place of residence and governmental regions shows that quality of life varies significantly across parts of the country. For instance, the MWI reveals a statistically significant gap in well-being among the urban and rural populations across the United Kingdom, with a 10-percentage point difference in the proportion of people enjoying favourable well-being. The percentage of people reporting 'decent' well-being is similar across the areas, but the difference grows across the other gradients, with more of those living in rural areas enjoying 'high' well-being, while 'narrow' well-being is more common among those in urban areas. Similarly, while nationally 51.3 percent

of people have favourable well-being according to the MWI, there are stark inequalities across regions, with the incidence of those with favourable well-being ranging from 42 percent in London to 57 percent in the East Midlands. Perhaps surprisingly, London has the highest proportion of unhappy people, with less than half of the city's population reporting sufficiency in three quarters or more of the indicators. Based on the incidence of those with less favourable well-being, the capital is significantly different from all regions except the North East of England. There are also significant differences for the East Midlands, the region with the highest level of well-being, where the headcount ratio is significantly different from the West Midlands, North East, East England, South East, London, Scotland and Northern Ireland. There are also statistically significant differences between the South West and North East, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The disparity across regions is also notable across gradients, with only 11 percent of Londoners reporting high well-being whereas this figure is close to 20 percent in the East Midlands and South West.

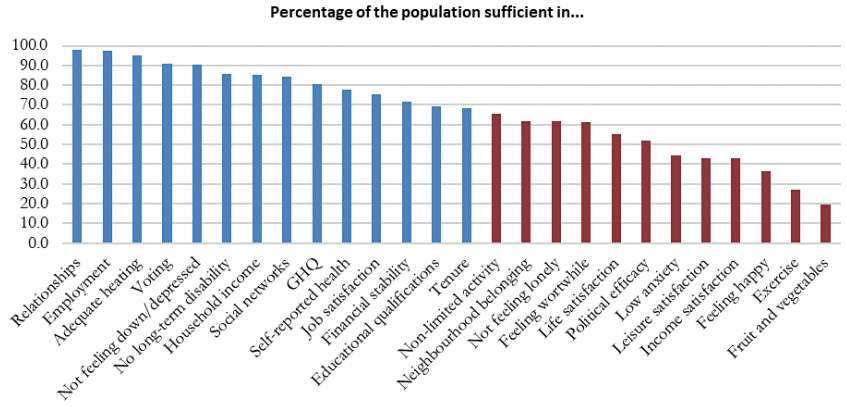
The largest differences in well-being, however, appear across ethnic groups, where the MWI ranges from 0.692 to 0.830. Whereas 53 percent of people who self-identify as white have favourable well-being, among those who identify as part of all other ethnic groups, it's a startling 35 percent. Breaking down the results further by ethnic groups according to the census classification is difficult because of small sample sizes. But if interpreted with caution, we see that these distinctions may become even more prevalent, with 73 percent of people from Black/African/Caribbean/Black British background lacking sufficiency in more than a quarter of the indicators. Similarly, the average number of indicators an individual is sufficient in is distinctively higher for the people in the White group across both favourable/happy and the less favourable/unhappy population. Delving further into the data shows that among the two groups, more than 10 percent of all people from Black/African/Caribbean/Black British background and more than 18 percent of people from the Other ethnic group background have the lowest level of well-being, with sufficiency in less than half of the indicators, as opposed to less than 4 percent of people who self-identify as white belonging to this gradient.

5.3 What Does Well-being Look Like and How Can It Be Improved?

Figure 4 presents the analysis of the results by indicator, showing the percentage of people who are sufficient in each of the indicators before applying any of the well-being thresholds. There is a large variation across the indicators, ranging from only 2 percent of people living in unhappy relationships to over 80 percent of people not meeting the sufficiency threshold for nutrition (consumption of

five fruits/vegetables per day). The orange bars refer to indicators where less than two thirds of the population has sufficiency, while the indicators in blue point to areas of life in which the majority of people meet the sufficiency cut-off. For instance, five of the indicators have an incidence of over 90 percent, with only a minority of people reporting feeling unhappy with their personal relationships or feeling down or depressed during the last four weeks.

Figure 4. Sufficiency across indicators for the total population



Source: Authors' calculations.

Some of the objective well-being indicators such as unemployment, voting or low income also have low incidence. For instance, fewer than 3 percent of individuals report being unemployed, and fewer than 15 percent live in households below the income poverty line, while fewer than 5 percent report not being able to heat their home adequately during winter, which aligns with official statistics.[26]

Meanwhile, less than half the population meets the sufficiency threshold for 6 of the 25 indicators. Looking across the dimensions, the smallest values are presented for the health indicators on nutrition and exercise with less

[26] See the Office for National Statistics data on "Unemployment"; United Kingdom, Department for Work and Pensions 2020; and the Eurostat data browser on "Population unable to keep home adequately warm by poverty status."

than a third of the population lacking the necessary level for sufficiency. For instance, less than 20 percent of people consumes at least five portions of fruit or vegetables a day and less than 27 percent engages in at least 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise a week per National Health Service guidance. Studies have shown that lack of exercise and a diet poor in vegetables and fruit—which contain high amounts of fibre, vitamins, minerals and natural as opposed to refined sugar—significantly increases the chance of obesity, which has been linked to Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and other chronic health conditions.[27] Similarly, the subjective well-being indicators capturing levels of unhappiness, anxiety, loneliness and lack of worth have lower levels of sufficiency. These findings amplify and reinforce the discourse around the importance of both physical and mental health to well-being. At a time when health is at the forefront of government policy and media attention, and health services struggle, the findings present a striking picture of the general health of the British population. They echo the importance of refocusing attention on all aspects of health including psychological well-being, and implementing a public health campaign to increase sufficiency in fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity, both of which are related to growing levels of obesity and chronic illness.

The issue of loneliness has received renewed attention following the report by the Jo Cox foundation and the subsequent government strategy on loneliness, and as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, with research indicating increased levels of loneliness, especially among those who were the loneliest preceding the pandemic.[28] Understanding Society data from 2017-2019 show that more than 63 percent of the population reports feeling unhappy or depressed, and more than 44 percent says they have felt anxious, indicated by feeling under strain, and losing sleep more than usual. While these questions capture momentary emotions with short recall periods, the indicator on feeling down or depressed in the last four weeks, and the GHQ indicator on overall mental health both show higher levels of sufficiency for the population.

Interestingly, 48 percent of people lack sufficiency in political efficacy—agreeing that public officials don't care about people like them or that they don't have any say in what the Government does. It is without doubt that increasing support for policies and confidence in elected officials are crucial in a time where successful responses to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic rely heavily on mutual trust

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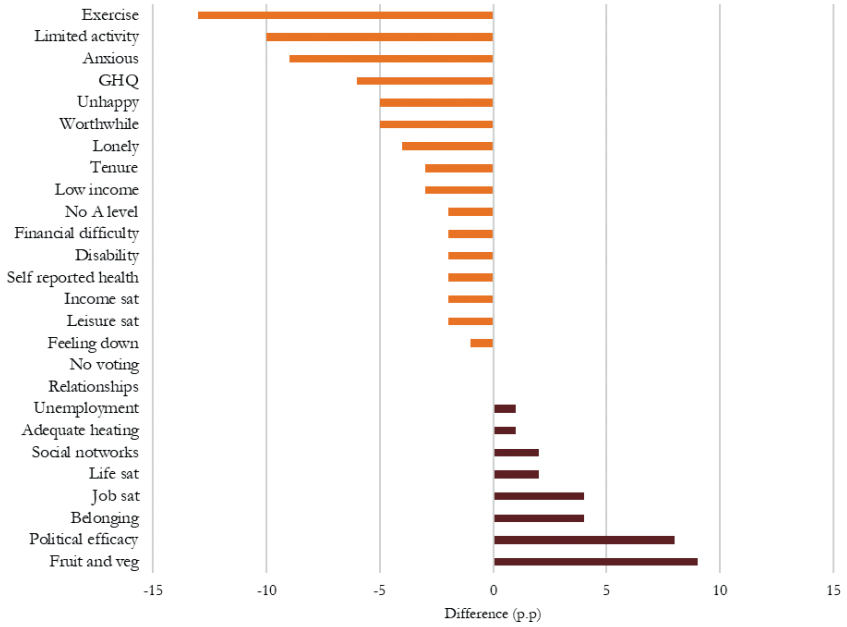
[27] See the World Health Organization website on obesity and overweight and the National Health Service webpage on obesity.

[28] See What Works Wellbeing 2020.

between governments and members of the public. Although these results hint at a large segment of society feeling disengaged, only 9 percent of people lack sufficiency in the indicator on voting.[29]

Figure 5. Gender gap in sufficiency



Source: Authors' calculations.

Analysing the difference in deprivations by gender reveals a gap, with women reporting higher deprivation in 17 of the 26 of indicators as opposed to men, as shown in Figure 5. Women have lower sufficiency in indicators related to physical health, psychological well-being and material deprivation, while fewer men are sufficient in indicators concerning social relations and belonging, life

[29] Only a subsection of the sample was asked this question following the 2017 general election. Thus, a large share of the sample is considered sufficient by default, which likely contributes to the high level of sufficiency.

and job satisfaction, political efficacy and nutrition. Nine of the indicators have a more than 3 percentage point difference in deprivation between the two genders. For instance, there is a 13-percentage point difference in the proportion of men and women who complete the required minimum amount of exercise as defined by the National Health Service, and a 9 percentage point difference in the proportion of women and men who report feeling anxious. These patterns reinforce the need to view well-being through a gendered lens with appropriate policies focusing on decreasing inequalities in quality of life between the two groups.

5.4 How Are People Enjoying Well-being?

An advantage of the well-being index is that it enables us to view the contribution of each indicator and dimension to the overall MWI. Mathematically, indicator or dimensional contributions are a function of the censored headcount ratios (in this case, the percentage of people with favourable well-being who are sufficient in each of the indicators) and the weights. Indicator contributions are simply summed to obtain the dimensional contribution. This means that indicators with larger weights or those with higher headcount ratios will have a larger contribution to the MWI. Table 5 shows the contribution of each dimension to the MWI, indicating the differences in the ways in which people enjoy well-being according to the two measures. Overall, contributions are more evenly spread across Measure 2, which groups the satisfaction questions in a single dimension and uses the GHQ to capture psychological well-being. Across both measures, the 'what we do' dimension makes the largest contribution, implying that employment status and quality, and amount of leisure time are important for good quality of life. The dimension with the lowest contribution across both measures is personal well-being, with the indicators related to psychological well-being and satisfaction having lower censored headcount ratios.

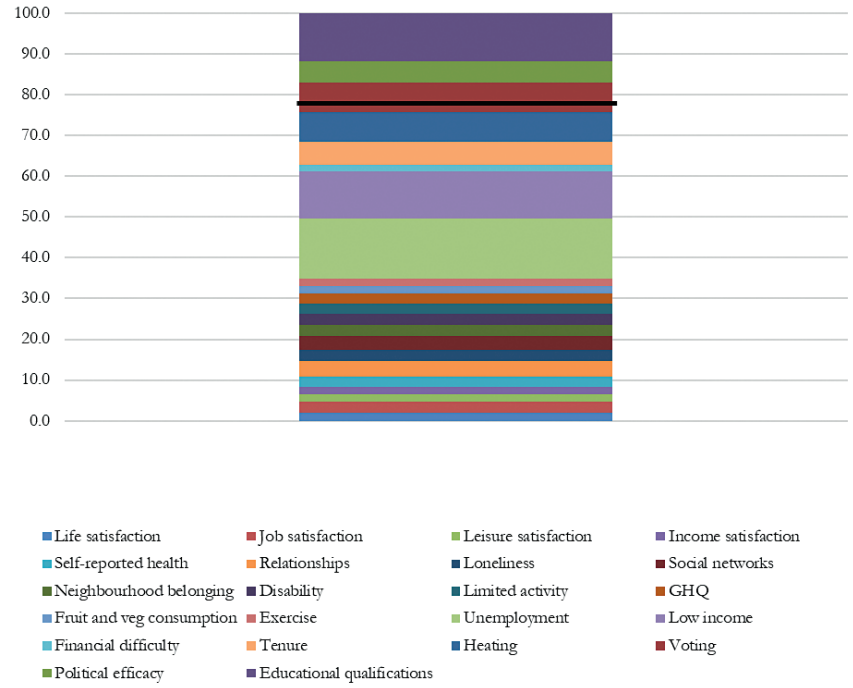
Table 5. Percentage contribution of each dimension to the MWI

Dimension	Percentage contribution to MWI	
	Measure 1	Measure 2
Personal well-being	10	11
Our relationships	13	13
Health	12	11
What we do	14	15
Education	13	13
Personal finance	13	13
Living standards	13	12
Governance	12	12

Source: Authors' calculations.

Moving beyond dimensions, Figure 6 presents the percentage contributions of the 21 indicators to the MWI, using the results from the second measure. The black dividing lines mark the eight dimensions of well-being. Sufficiency in employment (15 percent) makes the largest contribution to individual well-being, followed by having a qualification of A level or above (12 percent) and sufficient household income (12 percent). Other indicators with a larger contribution are adequate heating (7 percent), voting (7 percent) and owning a house outright or with a mortgage (6 percent). The indicators in the personal well-being and health dimensions contribute between 2 and 3 percent, while the indicators relating to social relationships have slightly larger contributions ranging from 3 to 4 percent.

Figure 6. Percentage contribution of each indicator to the MWI (Measure 2)



Source: Authors' calculations.

5.5 How Does Well-being Align with Life Satisfaction?

Life satisfaction captures an assessment of one's live over various dimensions, providing an overall indication of happiness. As a result, it is often used to proxy individual well-being. Table 6 compares answers to the life satisfaction questions in Understanding Society with the results from the MWI. Two-thirds of those satisfied with their lives overall are identified as having less favourable well-being according to the MWI, with nearly a quarter of people classified as having narrow or low well-being. In contrast, 17 percent of those who are dissatisfied with their lives have favourable well-being according to the MWI, enjoying sufficiency in at least three quarters of the indicators.

Table 6. Life satisfaction by well-being gradient (Measure 2)

Life satisfaction	Well-being gradients (percentage)					
	Favourable		Less favourable			
	High	Decent	Moderate	Narrow	Low	Total
Satisfied	23	43	19	14	1	100
Dissatisfied	1	16	21	50	12	100
Total	13	31	20	30	6	100

Source: Authors' calculations.

6. Closing Observations

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has positioned well-being in the centre of public discourse, with many feeling the negative effects of national lockdowns that disrupted well-known patterns of working and social interaction. The pandemic has highlighted key aspects of social well-being such as physical and mental health, the presence of community and family, and access to green spaces and adequate living spaces (Fujiwara et al. 2020, Office for National Statistics 2020a and 2020c, What Works Wellbeing 2020). To maintain a focus on these issues and improve well-being beyond the pandemic requires a direct and targeted effort in public policy and political and public debate on nurturing well-being. A visible, policy-relevant MWI with its associated information platform can support this. In assessing the official well-being measure for the United Kingdom, Allin and Hand (2016) rightly highlight that while the Sustainable Development Goals and political commitments have elevated well-being to the public agenda, these commitments largely refer to measurement, and measures implemented to date have fuelled more discussion than action. Thus, while the last decade has seen new developments in the field, including the creation of a new official dashboard in the United Kingdom, among other steps, strong integration of well-being into policymaking has not yet followed. They argue that "if we are to go beyond the 'old', or at least well-established, national accounts measures then we must understand how new measures will be used in addition to GDP" (ibid., p. 21), and commit to *who* will be responsible and *how* they will use the data to improve people's quality of life. If the overarching aim is placing human development and non-monetary indicators of progress on the wider political and public agenda, measures need to accurately capture and track the well-being of the population to provide information to policymakers, while also providing a vital counterpart to existing monetary measures of progress in public discourse.

This paper has presented two early models of an MWI using data from a single wave of Understanding Society. Multidimensional poverty indices employing a similar methodology are used now in dozens of countries as official permanent poverty statistics. They are communicated widely and inform budgeting, targeting, policy coordination, and monitoring and management. In turning to well-being, the MWI follows the innovative example of Bhutan's GNH Index, which itself is accompanied by a set of policy and programme screening tools, so that human well-being is truly at the centre of governance. This illustrative exercise demonstrates how a multidimensional index based on the Alkire-Foster method could measure and track well-being across the population, and provide single-headline statistics appropriate for policymaking and communicable to the public. Unlike many conventional measures, the MWI and its associated information platform offer an intuitive approach that illuminates the complexities of well-being, while being easy to communicate to politicians, policymakers and members of the public alike. By applying the Alkire-Foster method, the MWI captures both the incidence and the intensity of well-being, showing the average share of dimensions in which people enjoy sufficiency, and thus going beyond a simple dashboard. While this current paper does not extend to analysis of well-being over time, the index is applicable to tracking changes in levels of well-being across time points, data permitting.

The MWI also retains the rich and intricate details provided in dashboards so it can be decomposed by gender, ethnic group, age group and region, and broken down by indicator to understand the composition of well-being across the population. It goes even further by capturing overlapping deprivations across different indicators and dimensions as information is collated on all selected indicators for all individuals. This can help allocate budgets to areas and groups highlighted by the index, and assess new (or existing) policies against their impact on MWI across the population. Looking at deprivations and indicators in detail can help to coordinate policy action and create integrated, multisectoral policies that focus on overlapping deprivations faced by those with less favourable well-being conditions. By increasing their attainments, either by raising the proportion of those with favourable well-being or by decreasing the intensity of deprivations among those with less favourable status, the MWI will also increase.

The illustrative findings of the trial MWIs, using data from a single wave of Understanding Society from 2017-2019, are data constrained. A key priority going forward would be to explore new surveys and collaborate with other actors to generate a final set of indicators. But if these initial indicators are accurate, they paint a picture of well-being rooted in employment, education

and happy relationships, while the largest deficiencies appear to be in health and subjective well-being indicators. The findings reinforce the discourse around the importance of addressing loneliness and poor mental health, and encouraging healthier lifestyles through exercise and nutrition.

As the MWI collates information on each individual in the data to create an aggregate measure of national well-being, the results were decomposed by subgroups and indicator to reveal the underlying inequalities in quality of life across the country, showing stark differences between white and other ethnic groups, for example. Policy responses could thus use MWI evidence to address differences in well-being identified across ethnic groups, age groups and regions of the country to ensure no one is being left behind, and all have the chance for a happy and fulfilled life.

With its level of detail and appropriate statistical properties, the MWI could be appropriately revised and extended across time, and could include robustness tests. This would give it the potential to complement and accompany key measures of human progress such as GDP. In its present form, the trial MWI is constrained by data issues and requires further work to make it pertinent as a well-being measure of the British population. Some limitations arise from constructing the measure from a single data source, due to the irregularity of data collection and lack of available data on some key indicators of well-being (e.g., sports or arts participation, volunteering and group memberships). With the advancement of the well-being agenda, these limitations could be addressed. Future work should also explore a linked MPI based on a subset of dimensions and indicators, and more stringent cut-offs, to explore insights that might arise from a joint approach to measuring poverty and well-being, and its relevance for public policy. Additional work might also consider changes in well-being levels over time across the United Kingdom, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Results for Measure 1

Table A1. Headline figures for MWI (Measure 1)

Disaggregation	MWI	H^s	H^{us}	A^s	A^{us}	Pop. Share (weighted)	Sample size (weighted)
National	0.790	45	55	84	62	100.0	26,501
Urban	0.780	42	58	84	62	75.5	19,999
Rural	0.822	52	48	85	63	24.5	6,502
16-19	0.817	50	50	84	63	5.8	1,549
20-29	0.728	30	70	82	61	13.0	3,434
30-39	0.721	28	72	82	61	13.9	3,684
40-49	0.751	35	65	82	62	15.8	4,175
50-59	0.763	38	62	83	62	18.3	4,842
60-69	0.845	57	43	85	63	15.4	4,080
70 years and older	0.895	69	31	85	67	17.9	4,744
North East	0.770	41	59	83	61	4.4	1,167
North West	0.793	45	55	84	62	11.3	2,985
Yorkshire and Humber	0.789	44	56	84	62	8.8	2,324
East Midlands	0.811	48	52	84	63	7.7	2,029
West Midlands	0.785	43	57	84	62	8.8	2,320
East England	0.802	47	53	84	62	9.8	2,586
London	0.753	35	65	83	62	11.2	2,959
South East	0.797	46	54	84	63	13.7	3,620
South West	0.803	48	52	84	62	8.9	2,346
Wales	0.797	47	53	84	62	4.7	1,232
Scotland	0.792	45	55	84	62	8.3	2,193

Norther Ireland	0.792	44	56	84	63	2.8	740
Men	0.799	46	54	84	62	47.9	12,689
Women	0.782	42	58	84	62	52.1	13,819
White	0.796	46	54	84	62	92.7	24,530
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	0.720	31	69	83	59	1.2	321
Asian/Asian British	0.738	32	68	83	62	4.1	1,081
Black/African/ Caribbean/Black British	0.694	24	76	81	60	1.6	429
Other ethnic group	0.664	24	76	82	56	0.4	113
White	0.796	46	54	84	62	92.7	24,530
All other ethnic groups combined	0.721	29	71	82	60	7.3	1,944

Source: Authors' calculations.

Appendix B: Missing values

Table B1. Missing values for selected indicators of the MWI

Variable	Missing	Total	Percent Missing
Life satisfaction	197	32,808	0.60
Worthwhile	129	32,808	0.39
Unhappiness	159	32,808	0.48
Anxiety	122	32,808	0.37
Unhappy relationships	141	32,808	0.43
Loneliness	208	32,808	0.63
Social networks	40	32,808	0.12
Neighbourhood belonging	217	32,808	0.66
Disability	43	32,808	0.13
Limited activity	143	32,808	0.44

Health satisfaction	189	32,808	0.58
Self-reported health	64	32,808	0.20
GHQ	78	32,808	0.24
Feeling down/depressed	207	32,808	0.63
Fruit and vegetable consumption	21	32,808	0.06
Exercise	213	32,808	0.65
Unemployment	72	32,808	0.22
Job satisfaction	138	32,808	0.42
Satisfaction with leisure time	196	32,808	0.60
Low income	24	32,808	0.07
Satisfaction with income	202	32,808	0.62
Difficulty with finances	129	32,808	0.39
Housing tenure	208	32,808	0.63
Adequate heating	80	32,808	0.24
Voting	69	32,808	0.21
Political efficacy	526	32,808	1.60
No A level or equivalent	71	32,808	0.22

Source: Authors' calculations

4. Monetary policy, regulation and inequality: a tale of inter-linkages

Gabriel Makhlouf

Good afternoon. It is a pleasure to be here today. I want to take this opportunity to talk about the Central Bank's mission 'to maintain monetary and financial stability while ensuring that the financial system operates in the best interests of consumers and the wider economy', and the importance of inequality in our considerations.

The title of my remarks today is 'Monetary policy, regulation and inequality: a tale of inter-linkages'. The use of the word 'inter-linkage' is deliberate, in two senses.

First, although I will talk a good deal about monetary policy and how it both impacts, and is impacted by, inequality, the interaction is wider than just monetary policy.

I am thinking of our actions in the areas of macroprudential policy, as a means for building resilience to shocks; in providing economic advice to the Government, to promote macroeconomic stability and long-term growth; and in implementing our consumer protection framework which aims to ensure that the best interest of consumers of financial services are protected. These are all germane to inequality and today I will highlight some of our work in these areas in the context of the current levels of inflation that we are experiencing.

Second, what do I mean when I talk about inter-linkages? This is simply the idea that the transmission of our policies, in terms of how they affect households, firms and the economy are affected by the level of inequality itself. This applies to policies that aim to build resilience in the face of shocks, as well as to monetary policy changes that can impact employment, output and asset prices. Even though inequality remains outside central banks' price stability mandate, there is growing recognition that the distribution of income and wealth are relevant to the pass-through of monetary policy.[1] And there is also evidence that monetary

[1] See, for example, Janet L. Yellen's 2016 speech on "Macroeconomic Research After the Crisis", which talks about the "interactions between distribution and aggregate outcomes".

policy action, and non-conventional monetary policies in particular, could be impacting on inequality.

This gives you a flavour of the issues I will discuss today. But first I want to give some context, looking at recent trends in some key inequality metrics.

Inequality trends and resilience

Since the 1980s, both income and wealth inequality – and it is important to bear these distinctions in mind – have increased in many advanced economies. For incomes at least, Ireland is an exception as income inequality has not increased but has actually fallen slightly since the 1980s, although the top 10% of earners still earned almost a quarter of total income in 2019.[2] In the United States, just before the pandemic, more than 45% of pre-tax income, i.e. before redistributive policies, went to the top 10% of earners, up from 34% in 1980.[3]

When we think of inequality within countries, the main factors driving increases in inequality in advanced economies include globalisation, technological progress and taxation.[4] Globalisation and technological progress have adversely affected the wages and employment of lower-skilled labour, while declines in the progressiveness of the tax system in some countries has contributed to increases in post-tax inequality. Overall therefore, the rise in income inequality has been driven mainly by structural policies and long-term secular trends. Taking a more global perspective – that is, across countries – global income inequality has actually decreased since the 1980s. This is mainly as a result of relatively stronger economic growth in developing countries, when compared with developed economies.

In most countries, the distribution of the household wealth tends to be much more concentrated than the distribution of income. For Ireland, we know this from data collected in the "Household Finance and Consumption Survey (HFCS)". This survey on household assets, debt and wealth, has been a key part of our policy research and analysis since 2013, when the first survey was commissioned by Professor Patrick Honohan as Governor of the Central Bank. This survey, and subsequent waves in 2018 and 2020, all of which have been

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2 Roantree et al. (2021)

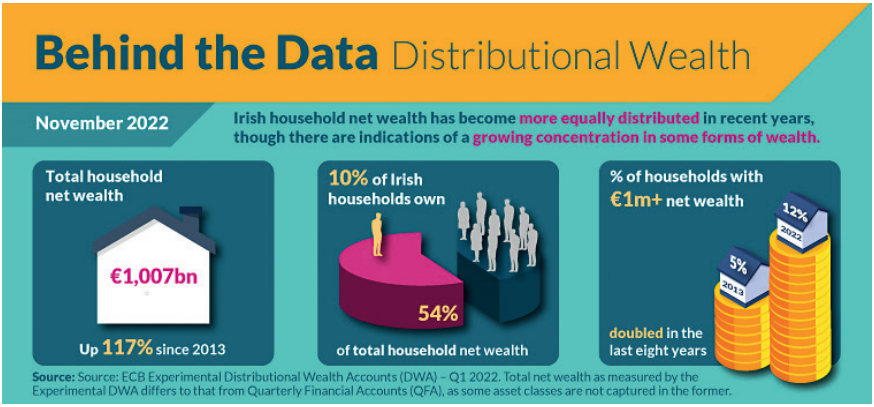
3 World Inequality Database (WID) (2022)

4 See for instance Wood (1998),Gozgor and Ranjan (2017),Lundberg and Squire (2003),Sarte (1997

carried by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Ireland, shed further light on the evolution wealth inequality in Ireland.[5]

Building on this data, and working with other Eurosystem central banks, we recently published new Distributional Wealth Accounts[6] which allow for analysis of the wealth distribution of households at a higher quarterly frequency. This data tells us that Irish household net wealth has increased significantly in recent years, with net wealth inequality also declining (see the infographic in Chart 1). However, findings also point to a growing concentration of assets among wealthier households.

Chart 1. Headline results from distributional accounts



Source: Daly (2022)[7]

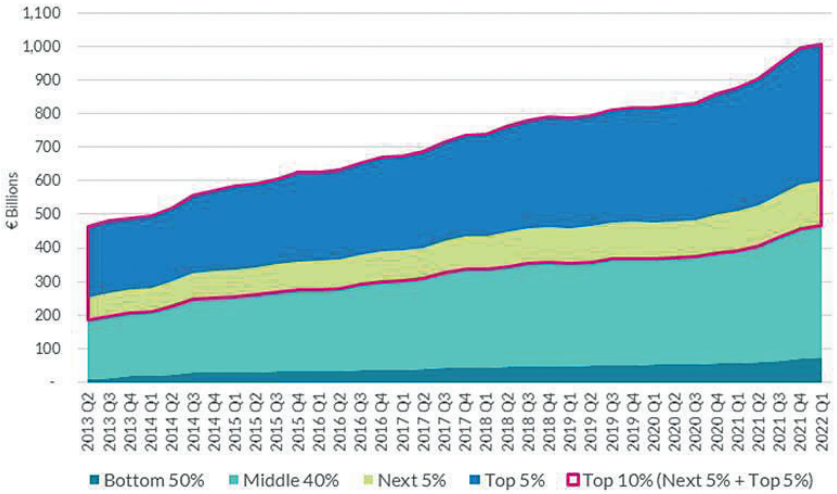
[5] The HFCS is a multi-country survey of household wealth carried out across the Eurozone. Since the first wave in 2013, the CSO has made several key methodological advances in the survey since it inception, putting it at the frontier of data collection in this field. This includes the use of multiple administrative datasets for the collection of information on incomes, asset values and, crucially, debt. For more background on the Household Finance and Consumption Survey (or 'HFCS'), see, amongst others, Arrigoni, Boyd and McIndoe-Calder (2022), ECB (2018) and CSO (2022).

[6] https://www.centralbank.ie/statistics/statistical-publications/behind-the-data/the-evolution-of-irish-household-wealth

[7] https://www.centralbank.ie/statistics/statistical-publications/behind-the-data/the-evolution-of-irish-household-wealth

Between Q2 2013 and Q1 2022, the collective net wealth of Irish households' grew by €544 billion (Chart 2). The Top 10% of wealthy households accounted for almost half of this growth, the bottom 50% accounted for 12%, with the remainder of the increase related to the Middle 40% of households by wealth.

Chart 2. Changes in net wealth across the distribution



Source: Daly (2022)[8]

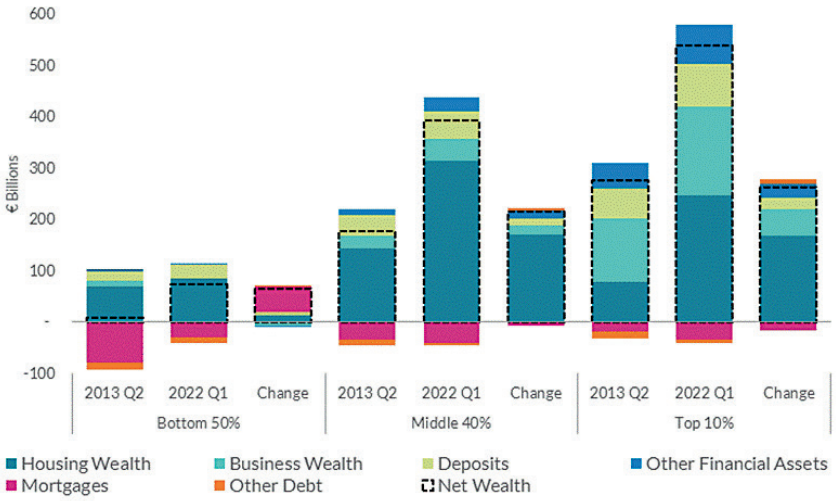
Notes: Wealth groupings are based on the net wealth distribution: the top 5% of the distribution (95% to 100%), the next 5% of the distribution (90% - 95%), the following middle 40% (50% to 90%) and the bottom 50% of the distribution (0% to 50%).

Approximately 80% of the increase in the net wealth for the Middle 40% over this period can be attributed to increases in housing wealth (Chart 3), with the remainder a combination of growth in business wealth, deposits and other financial assets. Housing wealth also represents a significant share (64%) of the increase for the Top 10%, though growing business wealth and financial assets are also important.

[8] Ibid

With high levels of home-ownership in Ireland (70%), it is not surprising that changes in asset values (house prices) and housing related debt (mortgages) play an outsized role in driving wealth inequality trends in Ireland.[9] Indeed, the fall in headline wealth inequality metrics since 2013 (Chart 4) can be largely attributed to the gradual decline in the proportion of households in negative equity since then, both via deleveraging, but also rising house prices.[10]

Chart 3. Wealth Structure & Change Along the Net Wealth Distribution



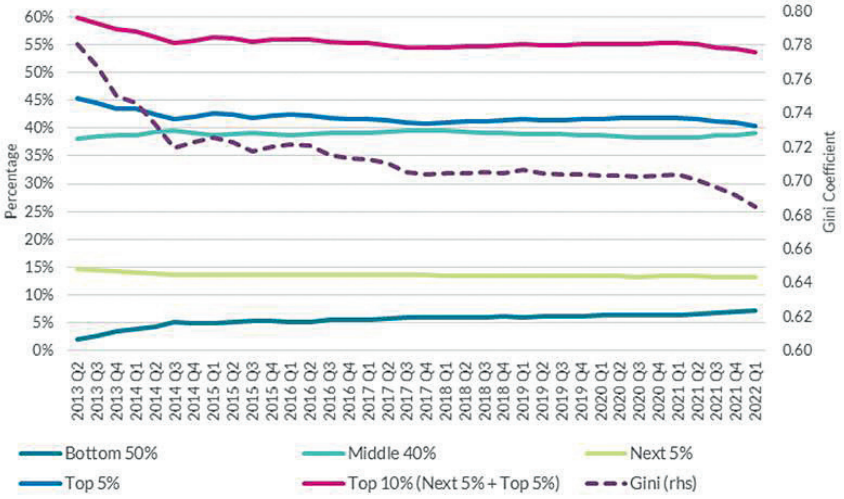
Source: Daly (2022)

Notes: Other Financial Assets include debt securities, listed shares, investment fund shares, and life insurance and annuity entitlements, they do not include pension entitlements or currency given low comparability between the HFCS and QFA. Business wealth includes financial business wealth (unlisted shares and other equity) and non-financial business wealth (e.g. business property and land)

[9] Ireland's home ownership rate is around the EU average of 69.9%. However, there are some significant differences across the EU, for example: Germany 49.5%, France 64.7%, Italy 73.7% and Spain 75.8%.

[10] See Lydon, Horan and McIndoe-Calder (2021) for an in-depth analysis of changes in the distribution of wealth since 1987.

Chart 4. Wealth Structure & Change Along the Net Wealth Distribution



Source: Daly (2022)

Notes: A Gini coefficient of '0' implies perfect equality (i.e. where all households have the same level of wealth), while a Gini coefficient of '1' expresses maximum inequality (i.e. where one household holds all the wealth).

Differences in the home-ownership rate can lead to differences in wealth inequality across countries. For example, wealth inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient tends to be lower in Ireland, when compared with the likes of Germany and Austria, where home ownership rates are lower.[11]

Increasing household indebtedness is also one of the key reasons for the *long-run* increase in wealth inequality in Ireland over the last three decades. As Lydon, Horan and McIndoe-Calder (2021)[12] show, inequality rose between 1987 and 2018 due in large part to households in the middle of the wealth distribution acquiring more debt in order to purchase housing (i.e., increasing leverage).

[11] See, for example, Table 6.1, page 87 in Lawless, Lydon and McIndoe-Calder (2015).
[12] https://www.esr.ie/article/view/1575

There are echoes here of Thomas Piketty's and others' arguments around the rise in income inequality in developed countries, and the realted erosion of purchasing power, which in turn contributed to increased household indebtedness for consumption in the run-up to the financial crisis (although the increase in debt in this case is more about acquiring an asset than maintaining consumption). Nonetheless, it is a key distributional issue for the Central Bank when we consider the resilience of households to shocks, and in the design of our macroprudential measures to promote financial stability. As history has taught us, it is only often when the tide goes out that we see the vulnerabilities in relation to distributional imbalances that have been allowed to build up.

Our borrower-based macroprudential measures – which limit the amounts households can borrow in relation to both the value of the property and their income – are designed to strengthen the resilience of borrowers, lenders and the economy overall. The recent review of the measures [13]reaffirmed our commitment to the tools as a means of guarding against very high levels of indebtedness and unsustainable lending in the housing market.

As we outlined in our first Financial Stability Review of 202214, household vulnerabilities are different to what we saw at the onset of the financial crisis in Ireland. Resilience is underpinned by debt levels that have fallen steadily over the last decade, an increasing reliance on longer-term fixed rates that leaves fewer borrowers exposed to rate rises in the short-term15,as well as some households holding considerable savings built-up during the pandemic. However, as we have highlighted in our research, these savings are likely to be unevenly distributed, with more than half of savings concentrated in the top 30 per cent of households by income.

But we do not take this resilience for granted, especially in the face of persistent shocks. Our ongoing analysis of household responses to high inflation and

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13 https://www.centralbank.ie/financial-system/financial-stability/macro-prudential-policy/mortgage-measures/mortgage-measures-framework-review-public-engagement

14 https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/financial-stability-review/financial-stability/financial-stability-review-2022-i.pdf?sfvrsn=3e74961d_5

15 In just the last decade, there has been a significant shift towards fixed-rate mortgage loans in Ireland. In 2010, for example, just 13% of outstanding loans were on a fixed rate; by 2022 this had risen to around 55% of outstanding mortgages, with 88% of new loans opting for a fixed rate period.

income variability (Lydon (2022)[16], Arrigoni et al. (2022)[17], Adhikari (2022)[18]) as well as to interest rate rises (Lyons et al (2022, FSR 1, Box C[19])) will continue to highlight groups that are most vulnerable, allowing for appropriately target measures to be implemented.

Next, I want to move onto price stability and monetary policy, and how this interacts with inequality.

Price stability, monetary policy and inequality

Though central banks actions can have an impact on the distribution of wealth and income over shorter horizons, over the longer run their impact is likely to be small. As a tool that is primarily aimed at tackling cyclical fluctuations, monetary policy is unlikely to be a substantial driver of structural inequality. We know that downturns can lay bare the different types of inequality that are lurking beneath – as I mentioned above – but, the sources of inequality run deeper and, I believe, are more structural in nature than they are cyclical.

But this does not mean that, as monetary policy makers, we should ignore it. This was one of the key messages we heard from the general public and representative groups when we conducted our own' listening exercises' as part of the ECB's 2021 strategy review.[20] To the extent that monetary policy has significant redistributive effects, it will of course impact inequality, at least in the short term. But an equally – if not more – important issue is how inequality can also impact monetary policy. In other words, how pre-existing levels of inequality – either in income and/or wealth – impact how monetary policy is transmitted to households, firms and overall economic activity.

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16 https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/economic-letters/household-characteristics-irish-inflation-and-the-cost-of-living.pdf?sfvrsn=5d86931d_7

17 https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/quarterly-bulletins/qb-archive/2022/quarterly-bulletin-q4-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=1666951d_6

18 https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/financial-stability-notes/no-6-inflation-and-mortgage-repayments-the-household-expenditure-channel.pdf?sfvrsn=a2d7941d_12

19 https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/financial-stability-review/financial-stability/financial-stability-review-2022-i.pdf?sfvrsn=3e74961d_5

20 https://www.centralbank.ie/monetary-policy/european-central-bank-strategy-review

There has been an explosion of research on this issue in recent years.[21] Much of it focuses on the how monetary policy changes – for example, increasing or decreasing interest rates, or purchasing assets – affects different types of households according to income, job-type or wealth. When I talk about 'conventional' monetary policy, if there are more households in society whose consumption is very sensitive to income changes – typically those with limited access to credit, or fewer savings – then the transmission of monetary policy to the real economy tends to be stronger. Our recent Central Bank Quarterly Bulletin article on "Household Economic Resilience"[22], emphasised this issue by quantifying for the first time the joint distribution of income and wealth across Irish households. We estimate that between 6 and 15 per cent of Irish households could be considered to be in a precarious position in relation to income risk, while also holding little – if any – in the way of savings buffers.

All of this goes to show that portfolio compositions of different households (for example, liquidity and debt) matter for the transmission of policy, as well as when they interact with the precariousness of income. But, for macroeconomic and monetary policy, distributional issues are not just confined to income or wealth. As I have highlighted[23] previously on the macroeconomic challenges from an ageing society, the distribution of age-cohorts across the population also matters. I think of this as the demographic channel for the effectiveness of monetary policy. As we all know, populations around the world – and especially in developed economies in Europe and the US – are ageing. If populations save more as they age, which is generally what we see in the data, then a greater stock of savings in the future as a result of older populations could blunt the effectiveness of monetary policy.[24]

The primary goal of monetary policy is to maintain price stability. This means preserving the purchasing power of the euro by ensuring low, stable and predictable prices. The Governing Council of the ECB – consisting of the 19

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21 See, for example, Hansen, Lin and Mano (2020), Lenza and Slacalek (2018), and Slacalek, Tristani and Violante (2020).

22 https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/quarterly-bulletins/qb-archive/2022/quarterly-bulletin-q4-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=1666951d_6

23 https://www.centralbank.ie/news-media/press-releases/remarks-governor-makhlouf-at-ibec-national-council-12-may-2022

24 In a recent paper presented at a Central Bank of Ireland seminar, Professor Joseph Kopecky from Trinity College, Dublin highlighted very similar issues, albeit in the context of ageing populations in the likes of the US, Japan and other European countries. Available here: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/macroeconomic-dynamics/article/okay-boomer-excess-money-growth-inflation-and-population-aging/AFCF81D45F4DC0FBA0487A3451022468

(soon to be 20) national central bank governors and six members of the ECB executive board – has decided that the target of price stability is an annual rate of inflation of 2 per cent. We are clearly very far from this right now. Although nominal interest rates have been rising, monetary policy still has a way to go to restore price stability, a pre-requisite for sustainable growth. Interest rates have been increasing for the first time in a decade (by 50bps in July, 75bps in September and 75bps in October), and they are now well out of negative territory. The future direction of travel is also clear: we expect to raise policy rates further in order to sustainably achieve our 2 per cent target over the medium term. I realise that economic indicators point to a deterioration in the outlook for economic activity in the euro area, with growth projections from the ECB and other institutions being revised downward for 2023 and 2024. However, this slowdown in growth will not on its own be enough to ensure inflation returns to its target of 2% in the medium term.

While maintaining price stability is our primary objective, we are also conscious of other interactions and side-effects of our policy actions, and take them into account when formulating policy. Indeed, as we reiterated following the 2021 strategy review, we base our monetary policy decisions, which include an evaluation of the proportionality of those decisions and their potential side effects, on an integrated assessment of all relevant factors. We will continue to do that.

While monetary policy has important consequences for the entire economy, not every household will be affected in the same way. The effects can also vary according to which particular policy is being implemented. And here I want to make the distinction between changes in interest rates – sometimes labelled 'conventional' monetary policy – and changes in the central bank balance sheet – sometimes labelled 'unconventional' monetary policy.

Conventional monetary policy – or changes in main policy rates

The direct effects of rate changes on income are relatively straightforward to understand. In the case of an increase in interest rates, the interest paid, for instance on deposits, will rise, increasing the financial income earned by households with savings, who are typically wealthier households, but also many retirees. On the other hand, those who have loans, especially on variable rates (and those on fixed rates once the fixation period expires), will see the repayments on their loans increase, and as a consequence their disposable

income after debt repayments will fall. This effectively results in a transfer of income from borrowers to savers, which has implications for inequality.

Looking at the impact on wealth, when the central bank increases interest rates, asset prices typically decline reflecting the expected adverse effect of tighter monetary policy on the economy. With the rising cost of money, bond prices decline and their yields increase; while house price growth slows as higher mortgage rates and a weaker economy discourage more borrowing and house purchases. Typically only those at the very top of the wealth distribution are affected by changes in stock prices, although these have an impact on retirement savings as well. Meanwhile, the impact of movements in house prices often have an ambiguous effect on inequality, as it is households in the middle of the income and wealth distribution that generally own their own home.

More generally, the direct effects of changes in interest rates depend on the types of assets a household owns and if they have borrowed to accumulate them. Furthermore, the magnitude of these effects will depend on the relative and absolute size of each of these assets in the household's portfolio. On balance the literature[25] tells us that, when looking at the impact through this narrow lens, falling rates are beneficial in reducing inequality, particularly income inequality in the short-run, while raising rates can work against it.

Unconventional monetary policy – changes in the size of central bank balance sheets

Quantitative easing, which is the purchase by the central bank of sovereign and other bonds on the secondary markets, works for the most part through its effects on asset prices (including housing) and longer-term interest rates, by increasing the former and lowering the latter. As we know, increases in equity and bond prices tend to typically benefit wealthier households who are more likely to hold such assets. However, evidence also shows that the opposite end of income and wealth distribution also benefitted from asset purchases as a consequence of increasing employment that benefits lower-income households in particular.[26] Higher levels of borrowing by households and firms, led to higher consumer spending and investment, with a positive effect on GDP and employment. This is thought to have decreased income inequality as employment rises with

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[25] See Colciago and Samarina (2019) for a review. Available here: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/joes.12314

[26] See Lenza and Slacalek (2018). Available here : https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/208224/1/1039829414.pdf

aggregate demand, and lower income households benefit disproportionately from cyclical employment expansions. For wealth inequality the literature is less conclusive.[27] It is difficult to quantify the effects, but they might be U-shaped, with the policy benefiting households at the very top (due to rising asset prices) as well as the very bottom (due to increasing employment) of the wealth distribution.

However, we now find ourselves in a very different environment, and the ECB like many other central banks is considering ways to reduce the size of its balance sheet. It might be tempting to assume that the effects of reducing the size of the balance sheet will mirror the effects from increasing it, but there are some key differences. The primary difference now is the context. The current high inflation is having a very negative impact. Falling real incomes mean lower consumer spending as households reduce spending on non-essentials, and divert more of their budget to items such as food and energy. For households that spend relatively more of their budget on items that are rising fastest – such as energy and food – the effect can be particularly acute, as we have shown in recent Central Bank research.[28] As a result, inflation is often justifiably portrayed as a regressive tax. Indeed, within an environment of stable prices, it is easier for firms and households to plan for the future, and for Governments to invest in policies (such as health and education) that promote wellbeing, and support the purchasing power of households, especially those on lower incomes. By laying the foundations for a more stable macroeconomic environment, monetary policy can thus help those policymakers that do have the power to create the conditions that improve the conditions for the most vulnerable. As I said in my letter to the Minister for Finance[29] in advance of Budget 2023, there is a role for fiscal policy in supporting those most vulnerable to the current high rate of inflation. However, supports should be temporary, tailored and targeted, to make the most of limited resources as well as limiting the risks of adding further to inflationary pressures.

The current macroeconomic environment is unprecedented as we tighten monetary policy while facing a higher probability of a global recession. There are

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27 See Casiraghi et al. (2016). Available here: https://www.bancaditalia.it/pubblicazioni/temi-discussione/2016/2016-1077/en_tema_1077.pdf

28 https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/economic-letters/household-characteristics-irish-inflation-and-the-cost-of-living.pdf?sfvrsn=5d86931d_7

29 https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/publications/correspondence/dept-of-finance-correspondence/pre-budget-letter-budget2023-july2022.pdf?sfvrsn=f1fa941d_3

costs to firms and households in terms of raising rates with adverse implications for inequality. However, these factors have to be off-set against the costs of high inflation which if left untreated in a timely and effective manner, will have far greater macroeconomic consequences. That is why we at the ECB cannot allow ourselves to deviate from our primary objective, which is price stability.

Credibility and communication

Credibility is a key element of *effective m*onetary policy. Credibility and good communication go hand-in-hand. As I have outlined before[30], I believe transparency, honesty and engagement help to build credibility and to set expectations. Trusting the Central Bank's commitment to price stability, and understanding exactly how it plans to go about achieving it, influences the public's (and financial markets') inflation expectations.

A lack of trust weakens the central bank and makes it vulnerable to political pressure. So central banks, like all institutions, need to build social capital. There are many definitions but I like to think of social capital as "the social connections, attitudes and norms that contribute to societal wellbeing by promoting coordination and collaboration between people and groups in society".[31] Trust is stronger where social capital is strong. Central banks can help build social capital through their actions but also through their communications.[32] In uncertain times, such as we are living in today, this matters. The ECB will deliver on its mandate of price stability. Our credibility is demonstrated by our monetary policy actions that are consistent with reaching our inflation target, and by communication that reiterates our objective and how we intend to achieve it.

Conclusion

The distribution of income and wealth is something that central banks need to pay close attention to, not least because it has policy consequences as well as implications for social capital and the public's trust. Central banks need trust to succeed. And trust is stronger where social capital is strong. Social capital is an important determinant of a community's wellbeing, alongside human capital,

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30 https://www.centralbank.ie/news-media/press-releases/speech-gabriel-makhlouf-rebuilding-social-capital-the-role-of-central-banks-01-april-2022

31 Makhlouf, Gabriel. Social Capital and the Living Standards Framework. Address to University of Auckland (27 March 2018)

32 https://www.centralbank.ie/news/article/speech-end-of-mumbling-incoherence-governor-makhlouf-26-feb-2020

natural capital and financial and physical capital, what I like to describe as our collective economic capital.[33]

Although central banks do not have the mandate or the tools to deal with societal concerns around income or wealth inequality, they can help build social capital through their actions and by continuing to focus on fundamentals.[34]

Successful economies need stable and sustainable macroeconomic frameworks and sound monetary policy that delivers predictable prices. They also need stable and well-regulated financial systems and well-functioning markets. At the Central Bank, we will continue to focus on our core mandate of price stability, a stable financial system and the protection of consumers. In the current inflation environment, the priority for monetary policy has to be achieving our target of 2% inflation over the medium term.

Price stability is a pre-condition for economic growth and the best contribution central banks can make to ensuring society has the resources to address the structural factors that drive inequality in society.

Price stability means we are providing the macroeconomic basis for sustainable and long-term investment in education, health, housing, and, ultimately, being able to provide access to essential public services at reasonable cost and supporting the welfare of the people as a whole.

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[33] Makhlouf, Gabriel. Growing Our Economic Capital: Investing in Sustainable Improvement in Our Wellbeing. Speech delivered at Victoria University of Wellington (3 November 2016).

[34] Elderson, Frank. Proportioning policy action to the evidence: making the monetary policy strategy of the ECB concrete. Address to The Institute of International & European Affairs (24 March 2022)

5. Towards Wellbeing for all: Participatory and deliberative dialogue and the Imagining 2050 toolkit.

Clodagh Harris

Introduction:

Today, I wish to talk to about participatory and deliberative processes to support the embedding of a well-being framework in policy-making and to share future oriented participatory and deliberative tools developed as part of the UCC based, EPA funded Imagining 2050 (I2050) project.[1]

By way of a brief overview, this presentation will begin with a short discussion of participatory and deliberative governance and their connection to the development of well-being approaches (section 1). It will offer a whistle stop tour of forms of public participation before describing the I2050 community engagements (section 2) and outlining a range of tools from the I2050 toolkit (section 3).[2]

Section 1: Towards wellbeing for all – participatory governance and public participation

Increasingly, citizens are playing a more significant part in policy formation through a variety of online and face-to-face consultations and other participatory mechanisms. This is driven both from the 'bottom up', as citizens seek more input to decisions that affect their lives, and from the 'top down', as governments recognise the democratic benefits of involving stakeholders and the public in designing and implementing policy (Fung, 2015). It is also widely acknowledged that meaningful public engagement requires well informed, equal and inclusive processes that recognise that the views and lived experiences of citizens' are a valuable evidence base to inform better and fairer policies (Bussu et al. 2022b).

1 https://www.ucc.ie/en/imagining2050/
2 https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/projectsandcentres/imagining2050/Imagining2050Toolkit.pdf

One of the most prominent contemporary developments in public policy and administration has been *'the rise of participatory governance innovations that seek to enhance the effectiveness and legitimacy of public agencies and policy making through forms of public involvement and deliberation'* (Bussu et al., 2022b).

In this environment, policymakers may view consultation and dialogue processes as a means to an end, the path to achieving a 'policy product'. However, as Bussu et al. (2022a) remind us, participatory processes are themselves meaningful for engaging actors (stakeholders and/or the wider public) in terms of participatory learning and participatory action. They have a value in co-creating policies that are more informed, more relevant to a given local or national context, more inclusive, more sustainable and as a result more effective to implement and more legitimate. Acknowledging the importance of effective and legitimate policies and policy outcomes, this presentation focuses primarily on the processes of consultation, dialogue and participation rather than on their outputs per se.

A recent NESC report (2022) on embedding of a wellbeing framework in policy-making presents four steps: building a shared consensus; designing a workable framework; implanting, monitoring and reviewing; and integrating and deepening. Overarching these four steps are what the authors term underlying facilitators, one of which is dialogue with stakeholders and the public. It is to this that this presentation turns.

When it comes to dialogue and participation, there is no one-size that fits all. Different forms of participation can be used with different groups, with different objectives and at different stages in a policy cycle and/or wider engagement process. As noted by NESC (2022), consultation is a key element of well-being approaches across all 4 steps. However, it may vary across them. For instance, stakeholder and broader public engagement may both be involved in visioning and consensus building (step 1), but more focus may be placed on expert and stakeholder engagement in the technical aspects of designing a workable framework (step 2). Similarly diverse forms of public engagement may take a targeted approach to address the well-being of certain groups. These may differ in length, objective and format and may take place in varied formats across all steps. More creative forms of consultation and participation may be more appropriate for certain stages. The visioning stage (step 1) may benefit from the use of a diverse range of visual and interactive audio visual engagement tools. They may also be more relevant for and enhance the inclusion of certain targeted groups and communities.

There are many forms of public participation. Ruiz-Villaverde and García-Rubio's (2017) pyramid of public engagement processes ranges from information campaigns, consultation, and discussion at the broader bottom levels to co-design, co-decision, and decision-making forums at the top. Their typology of public participation maps processes according to the numbers of people involved in a forum and their level of participation therein, drawing upon Smith's discussion of wide (quantity of participants) and deep (extent of participant engagement) participation (2009). The wider forms of participation such as information and consultation can be numerous in terms of participants but shallow in terms of opportunities for meaningful engagement, public input and influence.

Recognising the role for the 'pyramid's' lower less active forms in awareness raising, educating, building consensus and the solicitation of views, this presentation focuses on those forms on the 'upper levels' that require more informed, more considered forms of engagement that move beyond the mere aggregation of 'top of the head' preferences. It argues for participants to be more than passive recipients in relatively superficial forms of engagement and to be afforded opportunities to contribute to genuinely discursive processes that require more thoughtful, reflective and considered participation with fellow participants.

Mindful of the Chilvers and Keane's call to *'move from a normative and linear understanding of participation towards conceiving participation as multiple, overlapping, co-created and re-created spaces and practices'* (2020), this presentation acknowledges that participatory practice is itself should be reflexive, responsible to its effects, responsive to the 'distributed agencies' of participation and open to different forms of public participation and their impact on wider issues and wider democratic and economic systems (Chilvers and Keane, 2020).

Having briefly considered participatory forms of public participation, this presentation shares public engagement tools that may supplement existing public participation processes in embedding a well-being framework achieving its cross cutting themes of equality and sustainability, as identified in public participation processes to date (Government of Ireland, 2022).

Section 2: Imagining 2050 community engagements[3]

The I2050 project hosted by the Environmental Research Institute and University College Cork, funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, involved a transdisciplinary consortium of researchers from UCC and Queen's University Belfast that collaborated very closely with and partners, including Think Visual, visual engagement consultants and video production consultants from Brianoval.

Its aim was to develop innovative project approaches to climate dialogues, using forms of participatory and deliberative processes to co-construct visions and pathways for a low carbon and climate resilient society for 2050. Part of its work involved the development of deliberative futures forums, an interactive and future focused model of community engagement that worked with communities to co-create alternative ways to envision and plan for the future (Revez et al. 2021). Its community engagements involved three distinct phases:

1. **A pre-community engagement phase** that recruited members for the deliberative futures workshops through an open public call for participants and snowballing methods. This phase also included initial community engagements that asked members of the community to identify topics of concern to them in the area of climate change, this was done using a survey;
2. **The community engagement phase** that involved deliberative visioning and scenario building workshops over the course of two weekends (3 days). These deliberative futures forums, similar to other deliberative processes such as citizen assemblies, included accessible expert presentations that fed into facilitated discussions in which the participants reflected on what climate change meant for them and their communities using a range of interactive visual tools and techniques. Athlone and Ballincollig were the two communities involved.
3. **The post community engagement phase** involved sharing the recommendations and ideas from the community workshops with the wider community, policy makers, experts and civil society (Revez et al. 2021).

The I2050 forums were open to all but certain groups were also targeted to ensure diversity of participant perspectives, backgrounds and lived experiences.

[3] https://www.ucc.ie/en/imagining2050/

Similar to other deliberative democratic innovations (often referred to in the academic literature as mini-publics), they forums were a blend of specialist presentations and small group facilitated discussions. Table 1 provides a short overview of some of the more commonly used forms deliberative forums and the I2050 deliberative futures workshops. Expanding upon futures workshops, that typically involve critique, visioning and implementation, the I2050 project developed what it termed the deliberative futures workshops format that also included information and deliberation in terms of respect, inclusion and justification. Its process blended information, critique, visioning and scenario development, and implementation. This format was deemed the most appropriate in light of the future orientation of the project's research.

Table 1 Overview of deliberative democratic innovations

	Citizens' Juries	Deliberative Opinion Polls	Citizens' Assemblies	Consensus Conferences	I2050 Deliberative Futures workshop
Participants	12-26	100-500	100-160	10-25	12-25
No of meetings	4-5 days	2-3- days	20-30 days	7-8 days	3 days
Selection method	Random selection	Random selection	Random selection	Random selection + self selection	Self selection + targeting
Activities	Information + deliberation	Information + deliberation	Information + deliberation	Information + deliberation	Information, Critique Visioning, scenario development + implementation
Result	Collective position report	Survey opinions	Detailed recommendations	Collective Position report	Community Report with detailed proposals.

Source: I2050 toolkit (Revez et al. 2021).

The community deliberative futures forums and the tools used were underpinned by three guiding principles:

1. **Inclusion** that seeks to ensure a diverse and representative group of participants are recruited to the process;
2. **Equality** that endeavours to ensure all involved have an opportunity to speak and to be listened to with respect. This usually requires trained facilitators.

3. **Considered Judgement** where participants are invited to question, to justify their positions and to come to recommendations that are fact, future and other oriented (Revez et al. 2021).

They are drawn from theories of participatory and deliberative democracy where, put simply, participatory democrats emphasise the benefits of wide participation, through inclusion, direct engagement and empowerment while deliberative democrats place greater weight on informed, respectful and reason-based discussions (deeper engagement). Both recognise the need for giving citizens and communities a greater role in developing responses to real world problems and also see a role for story-telling, rhetoric and the lived experience of a policy in public engagements (Revez et al. 2021). Participatory and deliberative innovations can play an important role in framing a problem and/or issue; mapping options; and presenting a range of informed policy recommendations (Harris 2021).

Section 3: Future Oriented and deliberative tools for engagement

The tools presented below are not new, some have been around for many decades. What is new is the way in which they are offered as a suite of techniques with which to engage stakeholders, communities and the wider public in discussions that are both future oriented and deliberative. The range of tools presented is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.

The toolkit describes each tool and how can be used to facilitate public engagement. It also explains the materials, skills and time required and rates each tool's level of difficulty. Clear examples of how each of the tools was used within the I2050 project are provided. However, it is also recognised that organisations may wish to tailor a given tool to meet their engagement objectives, their resources, and the experience and/or expertise of the participants. Links to other materials are embedded within the toolkit by way of additional support to communities or organisations that seek to use a particular tool. A section on online deliberations and the factors that require consideration for such events is also included in the toolkit. It is envisaged that the toolkit will be of use to local community organisations, social enterprise partnership, environmental activists, local decision makers, official agencies and researchers (Revez et al. 2021).

Its creative communicative approach that uses drawing/doodles, storytelling and mapping is well suited to futures thinking that emphasises collective visioning and seeks to enhance trust.

Sense making and story boarding are two specific tools that lend themselves well to futures thinking. Each can be valuable in terms of horizon scanning and dealing with unfamiliar, difficult and unpredictable issues and public perceptions of them.

Sense Making

Sense making may be better suited to a wider form of participation, for example a broad public discussion at the early stage of a public participation event or process. It involves asking participants to choose a picture (from a prepared display of photographs, postcards, magazine/newspaper cut outs etc) that depicts their concerns or priorities on an issue. It invites them to present the image to their fellow participants and discuss why they've chosen it. Once everyone in the group has had the opportunity to share their image, the group is asked to put the pictures aside and deliberate on the meaning of an issue (climate change in the case of the I2050 workshops) in terms of personal community and wider impacts (another framing can also be chosen). The impacts and insights are captured by a notetaker and returned to later by the group for further consideration and refining (Revez et al. 2021). It can be used to raise awareness, scrutinise the existing 'state of play', spot trends, find meaning for uncertain, unpredictable issues, identify knowledge gaps and so forth.

Story boarding

Story boarding, on the other hand, requires deeper engagement and is rated difficult as it requires the preparation of a storyboard template that meets the participation's objective. It is more suited to co-creative, co-decision making events and processes. Breaking a vision into smaller, more detailed elements that consider the relationships between actors and institutions system, and explore trade-offs between policy choices, it can be very effective in refining and developing ideas. The I2050 project used three distinct layers to storyboard the issue of climate change. The first, inner layer identified the communities' main concerns about climate change, the middle layer concentrated on priorities linked to the core concerns and the final, outer layer explored visions of what

the group wished for in the future and actions and strategies to get there (Revez et al. 2021).

Empathy mapping

Empathy mapping, described as a human centred tool, invites participants to 'step into the shoes' of a citizen different from themselves (Revez et al. 2021). The simplicity of its approach belies the power of its impact. In short, it asks people to identify as different current and/or future citizens and to explore how they might be impacted by a given policy issue. This can is usually done as a group activity. In the case of the I2050 project, the topic was climate change, but this tool could be used for a variety of policy or other issues. It could be used to consider what Ireland of the future might look like for certain individuals and has great potential to facilitate intergenerational solidarity. For instance, empathy mapping could be used to ask a current day teenager what does well-being look like in Ireland today to a person over 70 living on the state's old age pension? In turn a pensioner might be asked to consider what well-being looks like in Ireland for a modern day teenager and what it might look like for them in the future when they are retired? Moving us beyond our own world view, it encourages us to be other-regarding, to consider the interests and needs of those of different backgrounds, perspectives and lived experiences both today and into the future. It can be valuable for visioning exercises, building understanding and empathy and as a means of conflict and crisis resolution.

Community Mapping

The final tool, considered by this presentation (more are offered in the toolkit) is community mapping. Members in a community use maps of their area to identify concerns, prioritise concerns, imagine alternative futures and identify and deliberate on pathways to getting their preferred future(s). It has been used for many decades and has proven valuable in working with communities in terms of awareness raising but more significantly harnessing local expertise and experience to co-create possible solutions to wicked policy issues. It has also been shown to empower communities and develop a common understanding of various risks within a community (Revez et al. 2021). It offers another way of engaging a community in a visioning exercise by starting a discussion on what they identify as current issues within their area and can also be a means through which they imagine a variety of alternative futures and pathways to get to them. Finally it can be a tool for evaluation, review and monitoring.

The tools briefly described above are a flavour of future oriented, deliberative techniques to engage the public in participation on a range of policy and

other issues. They do not seek to replace other forms of public participation but endeavour to complement them. Not all will be valuable at all steps in embedding a well-being framework or in stages in a public participation process. Their usefulness will hinge on the wider political context, the objective of the participation event/and or process and the resources available.

Importantly, they and the engagement processes in which they may form a part should be subject to evaluation and where necessary adapted, revised and refined. The toolkit also proposes a participatory evaluation process that includes three methods: feedback board, open ended evaluation and a questionnaire (Revez et al. 2021).

Public participation processes are not without their challenges. For our part, those of us involved in the I2050 community engagements identified the following and are aware that this list itself is neither exhaustive nor definitive (Mullally et al. 2022).

1. Recruitment challenges: achieving diversity and representation can be challenging. It requires serious consideration of factors that both mobilise and facilitate participation. This can involve working with communities and community leaders to recruit participants but also to draw on their expertise on how to develop the event(s) in ways that best facilitate participation in terms of timing, accessibility (physically, linguistically, welcoming/non intimidating space, information etc), provision of childcare, covering of expenses, payment of honoraria etc.1
2. Training and facilitation: Deliberative forums require facilitation and this can require training.
3. The need for sustainable resources and capacity building to promote and support engagement as well as commitment to providing timely and considered responses to the outcomes. (Mullally et al. 2022).

Conclusion:

The processes and tools discussed here are presented with the aim of strengthening current and future dialogue processes, whether with stakeholders, communities, the wider public or targeted groups, for the embedding of a wellbeing framework in policy making.

They are also offered as a contribution to debates on the construction of a political system and policy process that is more participatory, deliberative and committed to long term thinking and planning. As Dryzek and Niemyer (2019) observe there is growing recognition that, as we seek to address 'wicked policy' issues such as climate change 'whole systems of governance – spanning formal institutions, informal networks and civil society – ought to be rendered more deliberative'. A deliberative, future oriented reconstruction of politics and policy development could provide the space for the discussion of public concerns such as the environment, equality, future generations and intergenerational solidarity in ways that move us beyond 'short-termism' and towards wellbeing for all.

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6. Wellbeing Narratives: Inciting the Pluriverse on our island of stories – It takes a movement!

Peter Doran[1]

Introduction

In this paper I introduce the work of the international Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEALL) and an early intervention planned by WEALL's Irish hub. The focus of this intervention is designed to mobilize and excite emergent conversations about alternative "social imaginaries" to counter dominant economic narratives across the island in the realm of culture and the distinct role of cultural actors as animators of social reflexivity and socio-ecological change. The underlying vision of WEALL Ireland is the conviction that the dimensions of a wellbeing economy or economies are already emergent, globally and on the island of Ireland, and must come to fruition through a *social movement* that is grounded in our own local experiences while networked and supported in a dialogue with a global movement dedicated to shifting the dominant economic narrative of capital or neoliberalism. Our challenge, confronting planetary emergencies that are both social and ecological, is to courageously name and offer analyses of dominant economic narratives associated with "capitalism" and "neoliberalism" – and their precursors in coloniality – and to bring a new visibility and coherence to emergent counter- narratives and practices across the island. It follows that central government policy work on an Irish wellbeing framework may be a necessary but insufficient condition for a truly meaningful shift in our dominant economic narrative: *it takes a movement...a wellbeing economy movement.*

The WEALL Hub Ireland[2] initiative was launched in late 2020 when two Irish charities, the Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability (Feasta)[3] and the European Health Futures Forum (EHFF)[4] and I joined with Social Justice Ireland,

[1] Writing in a personal capacity at the School of Law, Queens University Belfast.
[2] https://weall.org/ireland
[3] www.feasta.org
[4] www.ehff.eu

Cultivate: The Sustainable Ireland Cooperative[5] to form an island-wide hub. I was introduced to the Feasta members and the EHFF by my friend and co-founder of the global Wellbeing Economy Alliance, Katherine Trebeck, after our parallel discussions about founding an Irish hub. While members of the steering group bring generations of policy work and engaged scholarship to the steering group of the Irish Hub, we are also inspired by radical voices of leadership in Ireland, including that of the President, Michael D Higgins, who has committed a series of speeches to calls for a new economics designed to respond to the depth and scale of the planetary emergencies. Higgins has, for example, told an OECD conference that "new ideas are, thus, now required and, even more, their communication to citizens – ideas based on equality, universal public services, equity of access, sufficiency, sustainability. New ideas are fortunately available in the form of an alternative paradigm of social economy within ecological responsibility, but they must find their way on to the public street."[6]

The WEALL Ireland Hub aims to popularise new and emergent narratives dedicated to repurposing our economy and acting as a broker of knowledge production in the domain of the wellbeing economy. We want to galvanize an island-wide and inclusive platform through a creative intergenerational and intercultural dialogue, informed by our peer-to-peer collaboration with other WEALL hubs across the world. The purpose of the WEALL Ireland Hub is not to download a prescribed vision of wellbeing from the global Wellbeing Economy Alliance but to engage critically with our international peers while drawing critically on our island's unique cultural, linguistic, intellectual and ecological resources to inflect and work in solidarity with new thinking or "social imaginaries" inspired by an opening to the possibility of creating a wellbeing economy.

The Wellbeing Economy Alliance: Global Network

The global Wellbeing Economy Alliances (WEALL) is a leading "collaboration of changemakers" working together to realise a time-bound vision and mission to make a key contribution to the cultivation of transformed economies around the world. Their mission is to build a movement for the redesign of economies to create shared wellbeing for people and planet by 2040. WEALL networks are engaged in strengthening, supporting and existing geographic and thematic power bases, and curating and democratising knowledge production.

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5 www.cultivate.ie

6 Speech by Michael D Higgins, President, OECD Conference, "Confronting Planetary Emergencies", 9.10.20.

Fundamentally, however, WEALL is about building a movement and the co-creation of new powerful "narratives of hope" to shift the terms of the debate about repurposing our economies and the shift to a Wellbeing Economy. WEALL is a collaboration that embraces national civil society hubs engaging with organisations and individual citizens, and includes the participation of a number of governments in the "Wellbeing Economy Governments" network (WEGo), including Scotland, New Zealand, Iceland, Wales and Finland. The WEALL Ireland Hub is calling on the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive to join the WEGo collaboration to help accelerate government thinking about delivering human and ecological wellbeing.

For WEALL co-founder, Katherine Trebeck, the repurposing of economic goals implies a deep shift in which social practices and worldviews need to change and current path dependencies that lock-in the current way of doing things need to be broken. This is a transition that must take place at all levels, at the level of the niche or micro- level, where innovation happens at the community or grassroots level; at the level of the regime or meso-level where the dominant norms, practices, policies and rules prevail; and at the level of the landscape or macro level, which is the domain of the markets, culture and political beliefs. In her co-authored book, *The Economics of Arrival: Ideas for a Grown Up Economy* (2019), Trebeck problematizes economic growth and national addictions to GDP, arguing that in the industrialised world the great challenge is not to remain competitive, or to increase efficiency or production. The challenge is to "slow down without derailing, to reimagine progress beyond more of the same."[7] For Trebeck and WEALL the challenge for humanity is to "make ourselves at home in the world".

The far side of the transformation envisaged by WEALL is not a replacement hegemonic economic blueprint. The shape, institutions, and activities at the service of the transition will look different, both across countries and between communities within countries. Other names for the Wellbeing Economy transition are discussed and pursued under the signs of "the doughnut economy," "planetary boundaries", "degrowth" or "post-growth", and the "regenerative economy." On the island of Ireland there will be an important role for government initiatives, such as the wellbeing framework[8], but the role envisaged by WEALL Ireland is one of inflection: to critically engage with our island histories, cultures and experiences of economy as the departure point for

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7 Trebeck, (2019), p.214.

8 www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/1fb9b-a-well-being-framework-for-ireland-join-the-conversation/

narrative shift towards new social imaginaries aligned to the wellbeing economy. A social imaginary, as outlined by the philosopher Charles Taylor, as opposed to an intellectual scheme, refers to the felt ways in which people and communities imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them, and the deep normative notions and images that underlie shared expectations. The word "imaginary" is deployed by Taylor because people do not ordinarily imagine their social surroundings using theoretical terms but carry them in images, stories and legends. Social imaginaries are also important because they enable common or shared practices and draw on shared understandings of legitimacy.

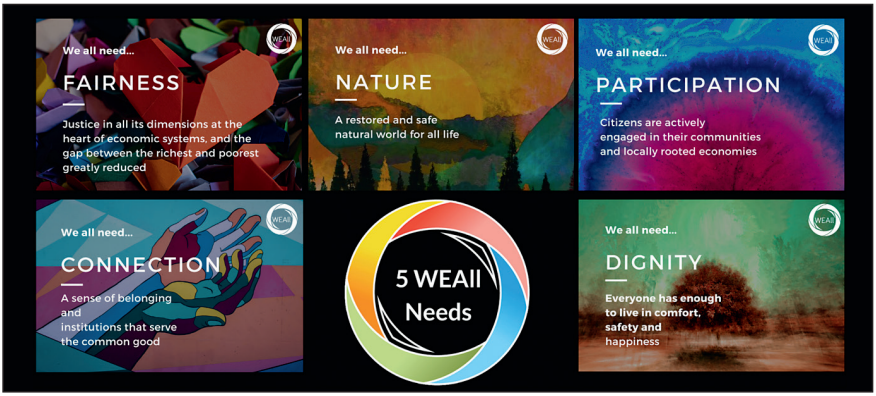
The Wellbeing Economy Alliance Ireland – Transitions via deep cultural inquiries

Examination of successful system changes shows that, in addition to good research, great communications, effective campaigning, lobbying, and pioneering practical exemplars, four other strategies are critical:

1. Leverage major crises
2. Create new power bases
3. **Promote new compelling and positive narratives**
4. Support these with a coherent and accessible knowledge and evidence base

For WEALL co-founder, Katherine Trebeck, a fundamental task of the movement for wellbeing economies is a shift away from dominant economic narratives and the promotion of new compelling and positive ones. This is an important dimension of the work for Just Transitions across the island and globally, if we are to move beyond a sacrificial paradigm: a popular view promulgated in parts of governments and the media that there is no way out of our socio-ecological crises that does not demand sacrifice and giving up valued ways of life and ways of being in the world. At the heart of WEALL is an intuition that limits can be strangely liberating. If we have reached a point in the dominant narratives of Western development where the exhaustion of our ecological systems is matched by an inner exhaustion marked by epidemics of mental ill-health, depression, addiction and pathologies associated with over-development and over-consumption, then the news about a Wellbeing Economy could prove to be both liberating and transformative.

Fig 1. *Towards an Island of Wellbeing: Animating an island-wide movement for a well-being economy*[9]



We are an island of stories. Some of them are dominant, deep-rooted and antithetical to individual and collective well-being. Others are emergent and tap into even deeper roots and demand our attention as part of a transition to a well-being economy in the context of global socio-ecological and economic challenges, as regularly rehearsed by President Higgins.

The WEALL Ireland Hub approach is based on a compelling desire to approach "system change" with a focus on the need to expose ways in which a dominant economic narrative has captured our popular imagination ("the attention economy"), and the opportunity to mobilize creative, life-affirming alternative practices that posit alternative world views. Other worlds are possible and emergent...in the realm of the commons, shared living experiments, zero waste and the circular economy movements, sustainable agriculture and community gardens, community wealth experiments, and the rights of nature. Practices of askesis associated with individual or subjective wellbeing, such as yoga and mindfulness, are being taken up critically and re-situated as practices of self-care alongside activism.[10]

The proposed objective of the WEALL Hub Ireland intervention is to mobilize a Community of Practice for "Cultural Creatives" working at all levels of society

9 www.weall.org

10 See my "Climate change and the attention economy" https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/author/peter-doran/

and across sectors (e.g. local government, higher education, community development, business), together with their sponsoring bodies, to support WEAll Hub Ireland's work of animating and curating an island-wide conversation on the well-being economy, drawing from our island histories, narratives, mythologies, traditions and epistemologies that are often communicated in song, writing, theatre, film, dance, the spoken word and other artistic/cultural interventions.

There are three characteristics of a community of practice[11]:

1. **Domain:** Community members have a shared domain of interest, competence and commitment that distinguishes them from others. This shared domain creates common ground, inspires members to participate, guides their learning, and gives meaning to their actions.
2. **Community:** Members pursue this interest through joint activities, discussions, problem-solving opportunities, information sharing and relationship building. The notion of a community creates the social fabric for enabling collective learning. A strong community fosters interaction and encourages a willingness to share ideas.
3. **Practice:** Community members are actual practitioners in this domain of interest, and build a shared repertoire of resources and ideas that they take back to their practice. While the domain provides the general area of interest for the community, the practice is the specific focus around which the community develops, shares and maintains its core of collective knowledge.

Working with the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust WEALL Hub Ireland are convening Cultural Creatives as a peer-to-peer supported group or Community of Practice that is broadly defined, including artists and performers who enjoy national reputations *and* other cultural activists working at county or local level. The Community of Practice will also include those "Creatives'" whose practice extends to forms of spirituality and mind/body work ("self care").

The globally connected and informed Community of Practice (COP) of cultural creatives/performers/activists will be invited to animate an island-wide (sector specific and place-based) series of conversations about the well-being economy. A core part of the mission or "cosmovision" will be to explore the specificity

[11] Source: https://www.communityofpractice.ca/background/what-is-a-community-of-practice/

of our shared island's responses to or island inflection of the global debate on shifting the dominant economic narrative of capitalism/neoliberalism.

Figure 2: Imagination Activism[12]

Interrogating social imaginaries from a post-development perspective

A generative dimension of the work on the wellbeing economy in Ireland can be explored as an act of epistemic solidarity with the Global South and pursued as a dimension of post-development work, drawing from two formative legacies of the island's histories and socio-ecological transformations. As an island of communities and narratives we occupy that position of "in betweenness" of which Seamus Heaney wrote[13]. In their *Twinsome Minds: An act of double remembrance* (2017), Richard Kearney and Sheila Gallagher recall that James Joyce argued that the Irish imagination was at its best when moving between

[12] Illustration: Phoebe Tickell on Imagination Activism. See https://moralimaginations.substack.com/p/imagination-activism

[13] Seamus Heaney (1987), "Terminus".

two "twinsome" minds – that is when it had "two thinks at a time." The authors develop this thought with the observation that the Irish have always been most creative when following a logic of *both/and*, acknowledging a mix of double fidelities, including national, psychological and cultural – "doublings that call for new mediations."[14] For the authors, the key is this *between* that summons what Heaney called a "symbolic reordering of Ireland" open to new possibilities of "Irishness, Britishness, European-ness, planitariness, creatureliness, whatever." For "whatever is given/can always be reimagined."[15]

If dialogues on a wellbeing economy are to participate in and draw from the richness of Irish imaginaries, they must begin with a certain fidelity and, perhaps, risk-taking that opens up stories that even precede and exceed narratives of the nation and its fractures. Country, note Kearney and Gallagher[16] marks a commons of earth and elements: a shared ecology of lands and waters: -

> *Country is a place of body and flesh, of brotherhood and sisterhood (Barton and Childers, the Sheehys and MacSwineys): it's a place of daring desire and yay-saying life (Casement and Gordon, Muriel MacSwiney and her men, Winnie Barrington and hers); it is a promise of unfailing natality, which precedes the nation and seeds its reinvention.*
>
> *But if a country marks a space before the nation, there's also a space beyond it – and it goes by the name of cosmos. This is a site that transcends all frontiers – a fifth province of mind that exceeds the four provinces of north, south, east and west. It is the Finistère of hope where all pilgrimages lead, going back to the navigatios of ancient Irish monks – diasporas of risk allowing for new possibilities of thought. Such a migrant cosmos was, we believe, a catalyst of the great cultural enlightenment that ignited a whole revolution of ideas in the extraordinary generation of 1916. It promised a genuinely pluralist vision witnessed in the proliferation of Revivalist writings and journals in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Brilliant imaginative work ranging from the 1916 leaders themselves – Pearse, Connolly, and Griffith all edited their own intellectual journals – to the bold cosmopolitanism of Kettle and the Sheehys. Utopian vision vowed to international emancipation and the regeneration of mind announced by James Joyce – one where everyone could say Mundanus sum: I belong to the world.*[17]

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14 Kearney and Gallagher (2017) p.15.
15 Ibid, Cited in Kearney and Gallagher, p.15.
16 Kearney and Gallagher (2017), pp.41-43.
17 Ibid (2017), p.42.

Field Day[18] writers, dramatists, and activists have worked hard to remind us of the influence of the significance of the "Cultural Revolution" within Irish history in the 19th Century as a pathway to political revolution and, ultimately, constitutional change to secure independence for most of the island. Brian Friel, in particular, wrote to remind us that the colonial imperative is to destroy all memory of what went before, for the new colonial order is always founded on amnesia. And central to the project of erasure is language.

Michael Cronin picks up where Field Day left off but embarks on an entirely new chapter and journey too: an ecological and linguistic one. In his wonderful *Irish and Ecology-An Ghaeilge Agus An Éirceolaíocht* (2019), Cronin reconnects questions of colonialism, forced amnesia and political ecology. He notes that language situates people in their environment in terms of both description and narration – telling you where you are and what's around you and where you come from – so the project of removing the Irish language from public life has – as one long-term consequence – been the alienation of people from their own surroundings. Cronin cites Brian Friel's play, *Translations* (1980), which explores the experience of a displacement and exile when agents of colonialism impose English translations of Irish place names. The play's school master cautions "that words are signals, counters. They are not immortal. And it can happen – to use an image you'll understand – it can happen that a civilisation can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape....of fact."[19] Cronin adds that it can also happen that a people can find themselves imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape *tout cour*:

> The population shifts to a language which bears no relationship to the environment in which they find themselves. The ecological consequences are profound in that the connection to place and history – a sense of which

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[18] See www.fieldday.ie/about/ Field Day began in 1980 in Derry as a cultural and intellectual response to the political crisis in Northern Ireland. Playwright Brian Friel and actor/director Stephen Rea set out to identify and develop a new audience for theatre. Friel's critically acclaimed Translations was the first of many Field Day plays to show at Derry's Guildhall before travelling throughout Ireland and the world. From its beginnings as a theatre company, Field Day also developed into a publishing company. Its founding members, Brian Friel and Stephen Rea, were quickly joined by Seamus Heaney, Seamus Deane, Tom Paulin, Tom Kilroy and Davy Hammond. Since the mid 1990s, Field Day has become synonymous with the development of Irish Studies. It has acted as a focus for scholars seeking to question the paradigm of Irish history and literature and in so doing, it has contributed to the international debates in postcolonial theory and various strands of cultural history.

[19] Brian Friel, 1980, *Translations*, p.43.

> is central to the creation of a sustainable and resilient localities – is seriously fractured.[20]

Transitional discourses are inherently preoccupied with the realm of the *in* between...the question of what is passing and what is to come, and how. The island of Ireland's transition is multi-layered, replete with double fidelities and even the tantalising prospect of a new constitutional moment of birth. Cronin captures this dilemma for the post-colonial Republic of the *in between* in an observation by Palmer, Baker and Maley[21]:

> *We may imagine ourselves at an angle to the Anglosphere, basking in our guilt-free positioning as both recovering colony and third richest country in Europe, but we have little countervailing sense of what exactly the absence that haunts our modernity might be.*

For Cronin, it is the absences from this past that are now coming back to haunt Ireland's present in terms of our relationship to the environment. The English Tudor experiment in (language) extinction and (territorial) extraction made Ireland the ideal laboratory for a form of ecological dispossession that would be replayed endlessly in various corners of the Empire.

For Sharae Deckard[22], Ireland's historical development has been profoundly shaped and continues to be shaped – not only by its colonial history – but by its role as a politically weak and unevenly developed semi-periphery within the European economy and the capitalist world system. Deckard draws on the work of Jason Moore, a leading theorist who attempts to integrate ecology into our understanding of world capitalist systems.[23] In Moore's environmental history of capitalist cycles of accumulation, the capitalist world-system is simultaneously a system of world ecology constituted not only through periodic reorganisation of geometries of power and economy but through the remaking of socio-ecological relations. In other words, world hegemonic systems of capital did not merely organize and re-organize resource and food regimes, these systems were also socio-ecological projects.

As such, the capitalist world-system does not merely possess an ecological dimension but is inherently constituted by ecological regimes and revolutions

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20 Cronin (2019), p.14.
21 Palmer, Baker and Maley (2019), p.15.
22 Deckard, S. (2016).
23 Moore, J. (2011), pp.108-47

that periodically reorganize and renew the conditions of accumulation to allow intensified appropriation of ecological surpluses.[24]

Illustration reprinted with kind permission of the artist V'cenza Cirefice.

The territory of Ireland played a significant role in the emergence of these different cycles of systemic accumulation as a laboratory for new forms of expropriation, from 16th century plantation to 21st century neoliberal austerity. Ireland functioned as a frontier and testing ground for new technics and imaginaries that were crucial to the formation of the Atlantic economy

[24] Deckard, S. (2019), p.148.

and to the expansion of the capitalist world-ecology. For Deckard[25] the island served as a geographical stepping stone for transatlantic settlement and as a laboratory in which to trial techniques of privatization and expropriation. Immanuel Wallerstein[26] went so far as to suggest that it was as if Ireland were the blueprint for America. Those most engaged in the colonization of Ireland – Humphrey Gilbert, Walter Raleigh, Richard Grenville – were also those who took a leading part in the planting of the first colonies in Virginia. Deckard[27] notes that the radical simplification of nature can be clearly seen in the context of the Irish plantation, where mass deforestation fundamentally transformed the ecology of Ireland, accompanied by radical forms of dispossession of indigenous populations and targeted destruction of non-human species and flora, including wolves and broad-leaf trees, in order to facilitate the importation and production of exogenous crops and commodities for export, and to eliminate the social and cultural bases for the reproduction of pre-capitalist forms of life. She adds that the significance of land and agriculture is almost overdetermined in Irish historiography, yet it is crucial to understand the transformation of Irish environments not merely as a product of colonialism but rather in relation to the larger early modern revolution in capitalist accumulation: "The reorganization of Ireland's biologically diverse bogs and forests into rationalized sites of capitalist monoculture was crucial to the erosion of Irish self-sufficiency and the integration of the island into capitalist world-ecology."[28] The infamous annals of Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland (ca.1598)*, composed at Spenser's 3000-acre settlement in Munster, not only captured tales of Irish insurrection, tactical famine, conquest, and plantation, but of "the ecological plenitude of Irish nature, conveniently emptied of its indigenes, [is] released for capture as ecological surplus,"[29] marking a historical shift from a feudal to capitalist mode of production, embodied in conceptions of abstract social nature as "tabula rasa" ripe for social re-engineering. Spenser dedicates an abstract mathematical part of his work to the imagination of a scheme for English plantation, with plans for a grid-like remapping of the island.

Mercier and Translations

For Sinéad Mercier and her co-authors[30], Brian Friel's *Translations* is a parable of how high modernist ideology disrupts local metis and knowing, detailing

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25 Ibid (2019), p.150.
26 Wallerstein, I. (1974), p.
27 Deckard, S. (2019), op.cit, p.150.
28 Deckard, S. (2019), Ibid., p. 150.
29 Ibid. (2019), p.151.
30 Mercier, S. (2020), p. 7.

the impact of a major topographic survey on the fictional rural Irish speaking community. The play is based on the colonial mapping of the island of Ireland in the early 19th century – the first such exercise in a British colony – in what Mercier describes not only as an economic and scientific campaign, but as 'Lawscaping on an imperial scale.'[31] In the play, Friel describes how Gaelic place-names are recorded with anglicized names or clumsy phonetic translations. In the process, the survey, for Mercier, legitimizes these corruptions and distortions in a way that served to undermine the local sense of place and being-in-the-world. Through the resulting distortion of language and place, the land is withdrawn from its inhabitants; from the communities that have lived there for generations. In the word of one character in the play, the translations are experienced as a kind of exile.

Mercier describes how the process of translation, as captured in Friel's play, achieves the three essential features of modernity: rationalising and categorizing all phenomena, optimising knowledge to instrumentalist ends; reducing pre-Enlightenment beliefs to mere superstition; and partitioning Nature from humans in order to better mould and instrumentalize it for the separatist ends of humans in power.[32] Mercier observes how systems of knowledge, such as the law, codify these processes of modernity – largely in the form of capitalist social relations, part of an outworking of what James Scott[33] attributes to the European Enlightenment and its outworking in a high modernist ideology that sought to create civilian populations from people, and resources from nature. Friel's Translations foregrounds this process of State-enforced legibility through quantification and calculation, resulting in the withdrawal from communities of landscapes and their intimate ties, meanings and relations, including landscapes of meaning. A kind of exile indeed.

The Pluriverse

In many ways the work of Field Day, Friel and others anticipated or pre-figured the emergent politics of the pluriverse: a challenge to the closures of colonial systems of knowledge and practice, now given expression in new post-development movements in the Global South. Post-development is a critical school of thought in development studies that situates our dominant economic narratives within a rich critique of Euro-modernity, thus extending our horizon

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31 Lawscaping refers to the role of law in imposing a modern grid of calculation and abstraction on local landscapes, rendering them for conversion to the universal languages of transaction and private property.

32 Ibid, (2020), pp.8-9.

33 Scott, J. (1998).

of critique beyond the confines of political economy. The focus of post-development scholarship is on a critique of modernity or Western dominance and its close association with histories of colonialism and ecological destruction; while scholars engage with indigenous and social movements offering diverse local alternatives based on their own "Epistemologies of the South"[34]. The main figures associated with this critical movement are Arturo Escobar, Gustavo Esteva, Serge Latouche and Majid Rahnema.

For Escobar[35] "Epistemologies of the South" is one of the most compelling frameworks for social transformation to emerge at the intersection of Global North and the Global South, theory and practice, and between the academy and social life, in many decades. Advocates do not claim to have arrived at a fully formed general theory but have sought to outline trajectories for "thinking otherwise:"

> ....precisely because it carves a space for itself that enables thought to re-engage with life and attentively walk along the amazing diversity of forms of knowledge held by those whose experiences can no longer be rendered legible by Eurocentric knowledge in the academic mode, if they ever were.[36]

Escobar suggests that Epistemologies of the South might be useful to those who have been at the receiving end of those colonialist categories that have transmogrified (Translated?) their experiences, turning them into lacks, or simply rendered them utterly illegible and invisible. There is insufficient space to examine the full spectrum of Epistemologies of the South here. Suffice to note that Santos[37], one of the key organisers of the World Social Forum, has engaged in what he describes as "the sociology of absence," effected by five "monocultures". Each of the monocultures is derived from the dominance of capitalist modernity and has impacted our understandings of, approaches to and access to:

- Knowledge;
- Classification of differences;
- Scale;
- Temporality;
- Productivity and efficiency.

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34 Santos, B. (2014).
35 Escobar, A. (2020), p.67-68.
36 Escobar, A. (2020), p.67.
37 Santos, B. (2014).

Santos has developed a "sociology of emergences," which seek to redress these monocultures and bring to light the multiplicity of social experience based on plural forms and ecologies of knowledge, temporalities, recognition of differences, trans-scales, and productivities. He has also sought to bring to light intercultural translation across diverse knowledges and struggles, and develop a notion of cognitive justice as a necessary correlate of social justice. The framework seeks to offer a non-Eurocentric approach to social transformation.

Escobar's work on "the pluriverse" can support a new conversation about the wellbeing economy by shifting the horizon of our imaginative encounter with these concepts ("wellbeing" and "economy") to our contested histories and legacies of European modernity and colonialism (or incorporation into the modern world-ecological system of capital and accumulation). This would be both an act of solidarity with other colonised territories, including indigenous communities, but also an act of solidarity with our own past insofar as it has become a container of silences and absences.

For Escobar[38], while the occupation of territories by capital and the state implies economic, technological, cultural, ecological and often armed aspects, its most fundamental dimension is ontological. From this perspective, what occupies territories is a particular ontology, "that of the universal world of individuals and markets that attempts to transform all other worlds into one single world." It is from this position that we derive the Zapatista dictum: "A world where many worlds fit." Political ontology refers to the power-laden practices involved in bringing into being a particular world or ontology i.e. a way of being in the world. For Escobar, a crucial moment that helps us to understand the persistence of occupying ontologies is the conquest of America, considered by some as a point of origin of our current modern/colonial world-system. He notes that the most central feature of the single-world view doctrine has been a twofold ontological divide: a particular way of separating humans from nature (the nature-culture divide); and the distinction and boundary policing between "us" (civilized, modern, developed) and "them) (uncivilized, underdeveloped), those who practice other ways of worlding (the colonial divide). Escobar adds[39]:

> *These (and many other derivative) dualisms underlie an entire structure of institutions and practices through which the single world is enacted. Many signs, however, suggest that the globalized world so constructed is unravelling. The growing visibility of struggles to defend mountains, landscapes, forests,*

[38] Escobar, A. (2020), p.73.
[39] Escobar, A. (2020), p.73.

territories, and so forth, by appealing to a relational (nondualist) and pluri-ontological understanding of life is a manifestation of this crisis. The crisis thus stems from the models through which we imagine the world to be a certain way and construct it accordingly.

This conjuncture and the questions it raises define a rich context for Escobar's approach to political ontology and the pluriverse. On the one hand he seeks to understand the conditions under which the idea of a single globalized world continues to maintain its dominance (the dominant economic narrative). He seeks to engage with, record and support the emergence of projects based on different ontological commitments and ways of worlding. For Escobar and his colleagues, the pluriverse is a tool for making alternatives to the one world plausible (to those of us living in the "one world" narrative), and second, for providing resonance to those other worlds that are interrupting the one-world-story, including some that are already emergent in Ireland (e.g. experiments in commoning).

The notion of the pluriverse has two main sources, according to Escobar. The first is theoretical critiques of dualism and "post-dualist" trends in scholarship associated with the so-called ontological turn in social theory. The second is the perseverance of nondualist philosophies (or cosmovisions) that reflect a deeply relational understanding of life, such as Muntu and Ubuntu in parts of Africa, and Pachamama or Uma Kiwe among South American indigenous peoples. Relational ontologies are also current in Buddhist philosophies and practices of mind-body. Movements in Europe to restore practices of commoning, energy transitions and the relocalization of food are also linked to foundational critiques that push back against the dominant narrative of capitalist modernity.

Buen Vivir and the Politics of the Pluriverse

A central premise of this paper is that new and old knowledges produced in struggles for the defence of "relational worlds" are often the most farsighted and appropriate to the present conjuncture of modern problems. A proliferation of transition discourses, including calls for civilizational transitions (e.g. China's discourse of Ecological Civilization), twinned with the depth and scale of climate and ecological crises, have underscored the critical work of Escobar and others in successfully questioning the very idea of "development" together with its core assumptions about economic growth (which has become an alibi for systematically deferring urgent action on inequalities), progress and instrumental rationality. In parts of the Global South the idea of alternatives to development has become more concrete. In South America, for example,

notions of Buen Vivir ("Good living") or collective well-being in accordance with culturally appropriate ways and the rights of nature have emerged as living practices. Buen Vivir implies an alternative philosophy of life that enables the subordination of economic objectives to the criteria of ecology, human dignity, and social justice. This relational approach to wellbeing is expansive, embracing relations not only with other humans but with the more-than-human (Nature) and with the constitutive relationships of interiority or relations with the self. Deep attention to those relations with the self help integrate the quality of our "self-care" to the integrity of our relationships to other beings. In the words of the Vietnamese Zen teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, the "way out is in."

Escobar notes that debates about "degrowth", the commons and Buen Vivir are "fellow travellers," constituting important areas of research, theorization, and activism for both Epistemologies of the South and for political ontology. Another area of discussion, debate, and activism in South America, linked to Buen Vivir, is that of rights of nature. To think wellbeing or Buen Vivir in the register of the politics of the pluriverse, navigating new ontological horizons, is to have two thinks at a time (at least two): wellbeing is no longer confined to the notion of the human or the collective but is caught up immediately in considerations of our entanglement with fellow beings and communities.

The pluriverse is not a template nor a decisive or pre-determined outcome but an orientation, inspired by the Epistemologies of the South, and informed by an acceptance that we are facing modern problems for which there may be no modern solutions limited by the closures and blind spots that have been part of the ontological investments of Euro-modernity. Ontologically speaking, Escobar continues, one may say that the current crisis is the crisis of a particular world or set of world-making practices with origins in the European enlightenment. Transition implies a movement towards the opposite or alternative, posited as a multiplicity of worlds (the pluriverse)…a multiplicity of possibilities that have not been exhausted by the Eurocentric experience. A world of "both-and", a world that is both European and open to thinking and being otherwise, not least as an act of epistemic and ontological solidarity. On the island of Ireland that solidarity is not limited to a relationship with others but is a deep act of solidarity with an opening to our own past, an opening to an undoing of our coloniality where that experience has been one of closure.

Ontologically, Escobar continues, the invisibility of the pluriverse points to a sociology of absences: what does not exist *is actively produced as non-existent* or as a noncredible alternative to what exists, notably relational ways of being. The colonial attack on the Irish language and attempt to erase memory was one

example of these attempts to actively produce the "non-existent." Writers such as Cronin and Manchán Magan are deeply engaged in excavating and recalling deep patterns of thought and relationality that remain part of our linguistic heritage.

Summary and recommendations

Ireland can occupy a special role in movements towards a pluriversal response to calls for Just Transitions[40], including solidarity with movements linking decolonial politics with the positing of Buen Vivir and related notions of wellbeing based on a profound shift to relational ontologies ("ways of being in the world"). Ireland has always been between stories....a place "in between" where histories of colonialism have partitioned memory, language, ecology and territory but only up to a point. Just transitions on the island of Ireland can embrace not only our socio-ecological crisis but afford opportunities for re-imagining ways of belonging across the island.

There are already signs of an emergence of pluriversal politics on the island, with the recent irruption of demands for a relational turn in our recognition of Rights of Nature. It is interesting to note that these early calls for a pluriversal politics have emerged in the borderlands of Donegal and Derry. Local authorities in Derry and Donegal, among others, have embarked on public consultations on what a Rights of Nature approach would mean for their local policies. The Citizens Assembly on Biodiversity Loss has received a number of expert submissions also calling for a recognition of Rights of Nature as an appropriate response to the biodiversity crisis, including calls for an amendment to the Irish Constitution.[41]

- Wellbeing in the context of pluriversal politics is a call to human / non-human conviviality. According to this approach, Buen Vivir, for example, is not solely a political alternative for redistributing economic resources or providing a more sustainable and cleaner environment, but also a proposal to open up life to a cosmos of worlds that would be intra-connected through respect, a proposal for

[40] Ireland is confronting calls for two just transitions: one is the familiar transition to a new socio-ecological order; the second, convergent transition, refers to the prospect of constitutional change on the island under the terms of the Belfast-Good Friday Agreement. These transitions and narratives will, ultimately, converge and inform one another.

[41] See the Peter Doran et al. (2022), Rights of Nature submission to the Citizens Assembly on Biodiversity Loss submitted by the Environmental Justice Network Ireland, available here: www.ejni.net

a politics that, rather than requiring sameness, would be underpinned by new departures, to the far side of difference.

- Buen Vivir, in the context of the wellbeing policy debate in Ireland, is a call for a solidarity with social movements posing alternative responses to the modern challenges of climate change and ecological breakdown, in ways that respond to the claim that solutions couched in modern epistemologies and ontologies cannot produce answers to the problems that modernity-as-closure has presented. The wellbeing policy debate must become an invitation to think otherwise; to bring something new into our world. For this reason, wellbeing and transition discourses share something profoundly in common with the work of art and cultural creativity.
- This is not solely a response to the urgent contemporary need to find dialogues, convivial well-living, and understanding between increasingly polarized ideological extremes, but also to the modern yearning for connectedness with oneself, other human beings, and earth beings. There is a deep longing for a renewed life of interiority, even the contemplative, as we increasingly encounter the fact that the physical exhaustion of the earth's capacities and boundaries has an index in our experiences of mental exhaustion, which shows up in epidemics of tiredness, depression and addiction in response to disconnection. Wellbeing in the register of the pluriverse is a call to reconnection and entanglement that includes a mindful embrace of the re-enchantment of life as we cultivate a return to our senses and with the sensual.

If our reception of wellbeing narratives in policy deliberations does not herald a disruption of the dominant stories that silence and subjugate the strange and unfamiliar landscapes of the pluriverse, we must look again. Let wellbeing become an invitation to render the familiar unfamiliar in the anticipation of the unexpected. There are contemporary cultural and political narratives and openings, including the work of Field Day, Seamus Heaney, Brien Friel, and others that have already disturbed what was once thought to be the stable languages and practices of our post-colonial landscapes. These can be new departure points for a pluriversal celebration of stories and possibilities that we have not dared to dream for too long.

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7. Developing Our Vision for Community Wellbeing

Helen Howes

Introduction

In 2014, the Local Government Act was amended to introduce Public Participation Networks (PPNs). The PPN recognises the contribution of volunteer-led organisations to local economic, social, and environmental capital. It facilitates input by these organisations into local government through a structure that ensures public participation and representation on decision-making committees within local government. PPNs have been established in every Local Authority area in Ireland. By the end of 2021, 17,548 community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental organisations were members of a PPN. Over 1,013 PPN representatives were elected to 397 committees on issues such as strategic policy, local community development, joint policing and more.[1]

PPNs were developed following recommendations made by the Working Group on Citizen Engagement with Local Government convened by the (then) Minister for the Environment & Local Government, Phil Hogan in September 2013. The paper advocated for PPNs to be established in each Municipal District of each Local Authority and stated that "each Municipal District PPN will commence its work by going through a process to set out what it considers necessary to promote well-being for present and future generations".[2] This was reiterated further in Circular Letter CVSP1/2015 addressed to each CEO, Local Authority and cc'd to each director of Community Service which stated, that the role of the PPN included a role "To develop a vision for the well-being of this and future generations".[3]

1 https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/2c4a7a-public-participation-network-annual-reports/

2 https://www.socialjustice.ie/system/files/file-uploads/2021-09/2014-02-28-workinggroupreport-published-final01.pdf

3 https://assets.gov.ie/88422/e1ffe238-bd9c-4539-8213-965578621b0f.pdf

Developing & Piloting the Process

From 2014, PPN stakeholders, including local authorities, community organisations and community volunteers began the process of developing the structures and practises that allowed the networks to establish and embed themselves in their designated geographical areas at county and city level.

In tandem, a reference group was established to hold national stakeholder discussions to identify how PPNs could be supported to develop a Vision for Community Wellbeing. Funding from the Environmental Protection Agency in 2017 enabled a pilot project to work on this. A call went out to PPNs and four were selected (Wicklow, South Dublin, Roscommon, and Longford) to work with representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Irish Environmental Network, and Social Justice Ireland to develop and pilot a process to develop a Vision for Community Wellbeing for their areas. The project was coordinated and supported by Dr. Harriet Emerson, independent consultant.

The pilot group came together in late 2017 and their first task was to define "wellbeing" for the purposes of the project. While wellbeing is often used to describe the physical and mental health of individuals, it quickly became clear that community wellbeing is much more than the health of its citizens. Community wellbeing includes the conditions that are important for the wellbeing of the whole community. These conditions could involve any aspect of our environment, society, or economy. Following extensive discussion, it was agreed that if all the elements across the six domains of Health; Economy & Resources; Social & Community Development; Participation, Democracy & Good Governance; Values, Culture & Meaning; and Environment & Sustainability (Figure 1) were premium quality, then the community would have optimal wellbeing.

Figure 1

A process was then developed (Figure 2) to run consultations with communities and use the inputs from the consultations to develop Visioning Statements (now called Visions for Community Wellbeing).

Figure 2

1 Workshop

PPN Members were invited to attend Community Wellbeing workshops.

At these workshops the Community Wellbeing concept was presented.

2 Asset Mapping

Working in groups, attendees then highlighted the "assets" and aspects of their community that they wish to preserve and protect for current and future generations.

3 Wellbeing vision

Using the 6 Community Wellbeing headings, attendees shared what they (and the organisations they work for) considered to be important for their community's wellbeing.

4 Consultation

Following the workshop, an online consultation was shared with members who were unable to attend the workshops.

They were provided the opportunity to answer the same questions asked at the workshop.

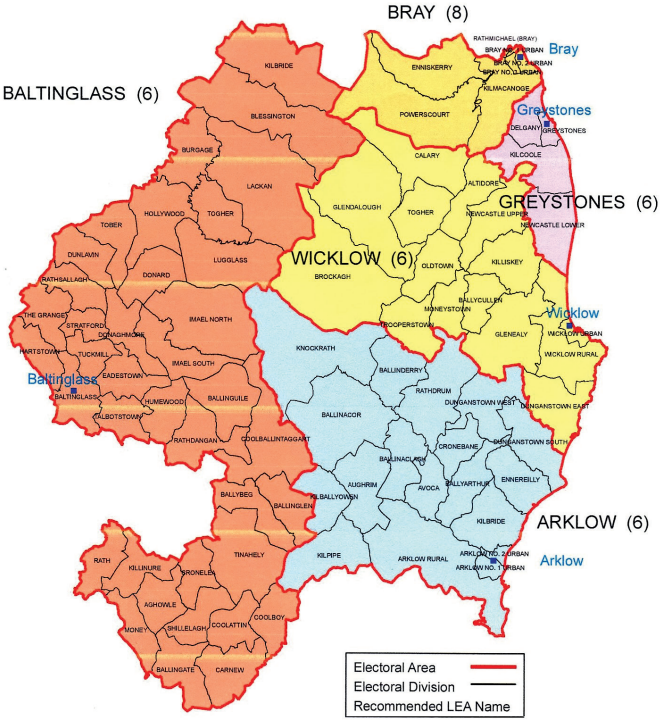
5 Draft Vision

The PPN resource workers and secretariat members then analysed the responses from the workshop and online consultation.

They then produced the draft wellbeing statements.

How this worked in Wicklow

Figure 3



County Wicklow is made up of 5 Municipal Districts namely Baltinglass, Bray, Greystones, Wicklow and Arklow (Figure 3). It covers 2,027 sq. kilometres with distances of 64.4k N to S, and 53k E to W.

Baltinglass is the largest Municipal District and is somewhat separated from the rest of the county by the Wicklow Mountains, causing an urban rural divide.

As part of the pilot process, Wicklow PPN decided to begin consultations in Baltinglass, the largest Municipal District, and to run two workshops, one in Hollywood (north) and one in Carnew (south). This was repeated throughout the year aiming one workshop for the main town areas and one for the rural hinterland of each Municipal District. A total of 11 physical workshops were run

throughout the county in 2018. This was followed by an online survey. Written submissions were also received from the Co Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg[4] and Wicklow Dementia Support Group

Workshops began with asset mapping where communities were asked what they valued in their community and wished to maintain for this and future generations. Smaller groups were then asked to provide input on each of the community wellbeing headings and asked if their community was the best it could be, what would it have, look like, feel like? More specifically, they were asked:

Social & Community Development

How can we be an inclusive community where we support each other and ensure no one is left out? What are the important social services and facilities we need to live well from childhood to old age?

Environment & Sustainability

How do we value our natural environment and man-made heritage? What can be done to conserve, protect and restore these? How can we interact with the environment in a sustainable way, and hand it on to the next generation in a better state?

Work, Economy & Resources

How can our communities thrive economically, with good jobs, and supports for enterprise, business and for people not in work? What resources do we have and are they used effectively and sustainably without causing harm to social and environmental sustainability?

Health

How can all members of our community enjoy the best possible physical and mental health? What about people with special needs, older people, and carers?

[4] Comhairle na nÓg are child and youth councils in the 31 local authorities of the country, which give children and young people the opportunity to be involved in the development of local services and policies.

Values, Culture & Meaning

What is needed to ensure that everyone both feels, and actually is, included and valued, and that our different values and cultures are respected and nurtured? What are the important parts of our culture that we want to hand on to future generations?

Participation, Democracy & Good Governance

What is necessary to ensure that our local government structures support the wellbeing of our community for this and future generations? What is necessary to ensure that we have a voice in the decisions that affect us and that all voices are being heard?

Approximately 2,500 individual suggestions in total were input in the whole process. The inputs were as diverse as the communities themselves as well as being an indication of what their needs, interests, and priorities were at that particular time. However, there were also many similarities and cross-cutting themes. The inputs were listed under the wellbeing domain headings under which they were discussed in the first instance. This information was collated in to a "What We Heard" document for each of the Municipal Districts. The "What We Heard" documents are available to view and download from the Wicklow PPN website.[5]

Some examples of recurring messages:

- Better transport services
- More local employment opportunities
- Use the areas assets to their potential for the benefit of the local community
- Welcoming, inclusive communities
- Valuing local culture
- Opportunities to learn from each other
- Easy access to health & support services
- More transparency in local government
- More communication & information provision
- More consultation with communities

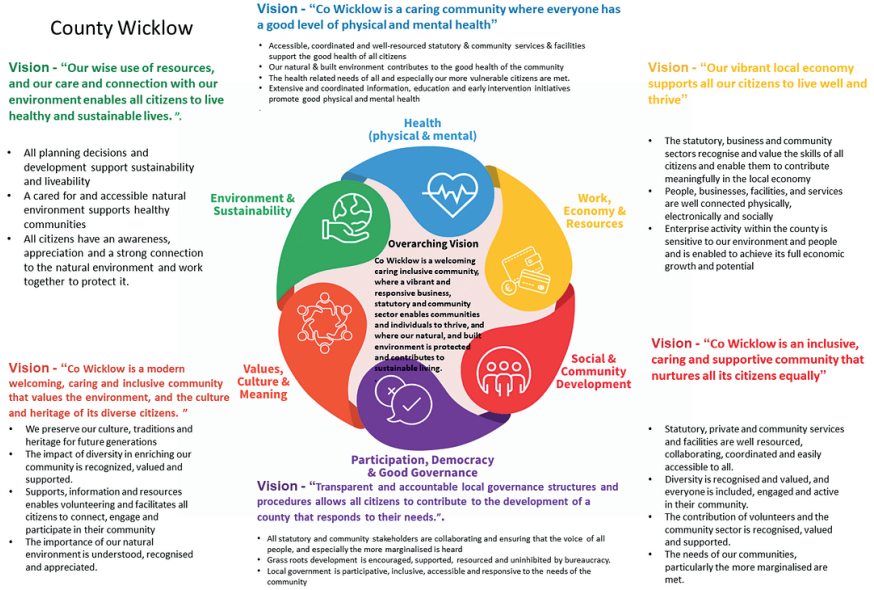
[5] https://countywicklowppn.ie/represent/

- Better infrastructure
- Our natural and built heritage is protected
- Develop/implement a system to get people to deal with derelict properties

Following this, the data was further analysed to identify any similar or cross cutting themes under each heading. This brought the data to a higher level allowing the Vision and High-Level Goals to be developed, initially for each Municipal District and then for the whole county.

The Co Wicklow Vision for Community Wellbeing (2018) is shown in Figure 4 below. The Visions for Community Wellbeing for our 5 Wicklow Municipal Districts can also be found on the Wicklow PPN website.[6]

Figure 4



6 Ibid.

The Benefits for the PPN and its Member Groups

All Wicklow PPN stakeholders have greatly benefited from undertaking this work. The main and lasting benefits were in the collaborative working, relationship building and networking that underpinned all the elements of the work.

At the beginning there was the learning and support between those involved in the Vision for Community Wellbeing Toolkit Development Team. This was followed by the real and positive engagement with member groups during the consultations. Due to the intensive nature of the consultations, the PPN enlisted the facilitative help of other agencies working in the community sector. This cross sectoral engagement resulted in a deeper understanding and mutual respect for all the community development work being done in the county by agencies, organisations, and the community groups and volunteers themselves. For example, as a direct result of the networking opportunities provided by this process, Hollywood Community Forum[7] was developed and has since gone on to implement various projects to benefit their local community. As their capacity grew the Hollywood Forum reached out to other Fora and networks in the district for peer support and to identify areas where they might work together.

Using the data

Wicklow PPN use the data gathered from the Vision for Community Wellbeing consultations regularly as a reference and to direct all our work. We have also used them to try to influence the work of other groups and agencies. For example, the burden of governance and bureaucracy was a repeated concern throughout the consultations. Wicklow PPN has since run a number of training sessions in relation to good governance and practice. Encouraging intergenerational learning was another repeated suggestion which we have passed over to the community section of the Wicklow & Kildare Education and Training Board (WKETB) and Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg. They then went on to provide opportunities for intergenerational support and learning as well as providing networking opportunities between Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg and Wicklow Older People's Council.

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[7] Hollywood Community Forum is a network of community groups operating in the Hollywood area of West Wicklow. The network was formed as a direct result of the Wellbeing consultations.

The data gathered from the Vision for Community Wellbeing is very versatile and has formed the foundation for many Wicklow PPN submissions to various local and national plans and strategies.

Examples of Submissions Led by Our Vision for Community Wellbeing

- Various County Policing Plans
- WCC Climate Change & Biodiversity Action Strategic Policy Committee Workplan Development
- Social Inclusion & Community Activation Plans for Co Wicklow
- Draft WCC Customer Service Strategy
- Towards a National Action Plan Against Racism for Ireland
- NTA Review of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area
- Public Consultation on the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
- The Co Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Strategy
- Heritage Ireland 2030 Public Consultation
- WCC Draft Corporate Plan

The data also acts as a reference and mandate for PPN Representatives.

Reviewing the Visions for Community Wellbeing in 2022

As part of the process of developing the Visions for Community Wellbeing, it was always intended that they would be reviewed to examine any changes in community priorities. Wicklow PPN had intended to start this process in 2021 however the Covid pandemic stalled this, and the review did not begin until February 2022.

This was fortunate for two reasons. In the first instance, following the restrictions that Covid had placed on networking and connections in the community, people were enthusiastic to re-connect. This brought an added element and positive energy to the consultations. Secondly, Wicklow County Council (WCC) were also about to enter extensive consultations to develop their second Local Economic & Community Plan. Wicklow PPN approached WCC, and it was agreed that our organisations would collaborate in our consultations using the Vision for Community Wellbeing process. The consultations began by launching an online survey that could also be accessed in hard copy in local libraries. The first workshop was run on International Women's Day with a group of 60 women from a variety of diverse backgrounds. Consultations continued

throughout May with workshops running in each of the Municipal Districts. A specific workshop was also run for PPN Environmental College groups.

The collaboration between Wicklow PPN and WCC encouraged the Wicklow Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) to apply for funding accessed by the Department of Rural & Community Development from Dormant Accounts to support 4 LCDCs (as pilot projects) to develop strategies to engage hard to reach communities with the Local Economic & Community Plan development process. Wicklow was successful in its application and this project is currently under way.

Differences and Nuances

To date (October 2022) the analysis of all the Vision for Community Wellbeing inputs has not been totally completed. However much of it has been sorted into some themes and while many of the identified issues and visions in 2018 remain, some slight differences and nuances have become apparent.

Issues such as lack of transport facilities, poor communications, disconnection between local government and communities, access to services, better infrastructure, and development of more local enterprise, were all topics that came up in both consultation rounds. However, this year we noted that the language changed around some of these issues. Conversations seemed to delve deeper into the topics and terms such as connectedness, and placemaking were introduced and used a lot.

Placemaking was a relatively new concept in the 2022 consultations. While the importance of "Keeping it Local" was strong in both rounds of consultations, in 2018 this was mostly discussed regarding employment and governance, whereas in 2022 it seems to be more about the importance of developing strong, supportive, and resilient local communities. Some discussions highlighted the vision of adopting a holistic approach to planning & development so that people and the environment could be nurtured and supportive of each other in urban and rural settings.

Connections and Connectedness were the predominant terms and strongest message in 2022. Connectedness was used in relation to transport and the need for better access to educational, recreational, and social services. It was used in regard to information provision and communications. It was also used to connect people and place, as well as connecting people with people. Discussions painted visions of built environments that would be specifically designed where

there are no divisions within them so that people can easily pass through and connect with others via green recreational areas that include places where people will socially interact.

In the 2018 consultations people spoke about the need for more access to local government in the way of more conversations and consultation with communities, more local decision making and more transparency within local decision making. The 2022 discussions indicated that community groups recognise and have more confidence in the value of the work they do with the limited resources they have. They also seemed to recognise the limitations of local government more. Their vision is that local government should interact with communities more so that they can work in partnership towards optimum community benefits. Accompanying this was the vision that local communities should have the power and influence to effect local development and social change.

A Learning Journey

Wellbeing is subjective. Like Maslow's theory of needs, wellbeing is dependent on immediate needs. For example, wellbeing for some individuals might be governed by the basic need of putting food on the table, whereas for others it might be buying a second car. Similarly, community wellbeing can be influenced by the make-up of the group, what their purpose is, who their client group or membership is and what they are ultimately trying to achieve. For a Traveller support group this might be access to housing and basic human rights, whereas for a community council it might be maintaining a hall for the community to use. Community wellbeing equates to equality of access and inclusion for all to achieve their potential. Due to the diversity and uniqueness of our communities, and those living in them, there will be differences and nuances in their wellbeing vision and therefore the supports and approaches they need to attain their vision will also need to be diverse.

Wellbeing is vulnerable to external influence and can change instantly and profoundly if significantly impacted. The recent pandemic is a prime example, as is the current climate change and biodiversity loss crisis, and the impacts of the war in Ukraine. These global problems have brought concerns and challenges for local communities and have tested their resilience on many levels. Many community groups rose to the challenges inflicted by the pandemic as was evidenced in the many voluntary supports and initiatives that were provided to the most vulnerable members of our communities. Likewise, many community groups are adapting and developing their activities to combat the effects of

climate change and biodiversity loss and many groups are supporting Ukrainian refugees in Ireland. It is very possible that these events have influenced the differences in responses to the 2018 and 2022 consultations as our communities change and adapt to their current situation.

We entered into this work with a very limited understanding of what community wellbeing was and were very sceptical of the value this work would provide. However, the benefits, as highlighted earlier in this paper, were significant and our learning continues with every conversation we have. More importantly, our engagement and relationship with our communities is richer. It is apparent that this work must continue if we are serious about knowing, understanding, supporting, and collaborating with our communities with the aim of lobbying for policies to be developed, implemented, and monitored to ensure that they are working for communities on the ground.

Since their inception, PPNs have developed themselves to be a key conduit for community engagement. The relationships they have built within their communities and their ability to network and facilitate connections are reaping huge benefits for all community stakeholders. They are ideally placed to continue this work of examining community wellbeing, documenting it, and using it to influence policy and decision making.

8. What counts when it comes to Wellbeing?

Colette Bennett

Introduction

The Programme for Government acknowledged that our "existing measures of economic performance fail to measure matters such as damage to the environment and voluntary work. They also overlook equality of opportunity, distribution of wealth and income and only value public expenditure on the basis of the inputs used, not the outcomes achieved." and committed to introducing a series of indicators that would more accurately measure wellbeing to provide a "holistic view of how our society is faring" (Government of Ireland, 2020a).

As a move towards the development of these indicators, the Government of Ireland published the *Wellbeing and the Measurement of Broader Living Standards in Ireland* paper as part of the documentation accompanying Budget 2021 (Government of Ireland, 2020b). This paper sought to examine the development of wellbeing standards internationally and investigate the options open to Ireland to implement something similar.

In February 2021, under the auspices of the Department of the Taoiseach and jointly sponsored by the Department of Finance, the Government established an inter-Departmental Working Group to develop a set of key indicators utilising the OECD Framework for Measuring Well-being and Progress as a "starting point". The Working Group was Chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and delivered its First Report in July 2021 (Government of Ireland, 2021). The report provided an overview of the work conducted to date together with a brief review of existing Government plans and strategies and how they might complement the work on the Well-being Framework.

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) Stakeholder and Expert Consultation Sub-Group was established at the same time as the Inter-Departmental Working Group to consider how best to consult and engage the public on the Framework. The First (and only) Report of this Sub-Group was also published in July 2021 and referred to three "overarching and inter-linked" priorities in this area – Equity, Agency, and Sustainability (NESC, 2021). The focus on equity referred the need to ensure that the Well-being Framework would result in fairer policies on areas such as income (including the eradication of poverty), distribution of wealth, fairness, access to services, and equality

amongst different groups, and respondents to the survey conducted by NESC called for "robust indicators" relating to equality including in relation to access to services, amenities and opportunities (2021, p. 43). The reference to "agency" in the NESC priorities focused on the need to ensure meaningful citizen engagement when determining policy priorities and the need for "deliberative and deep dialogue" with citizens. The final priority related to "sustainability" and the need to view policy through a "futures perspective", balancing current wellbeing with long-term sustainability. Ensuring the proper balance is achieved can be difficult as we look at the trade-offs between current economic policies and our ecological future and is described by NESC as "a relatively weak area in the OECD framework" (2021, p. 44).

The First Report of the Inter-Departmental Working Group set out the stages in progressing the development of the Wellbeing Framework as follows (Government of Ireland, 2021, pp. 11-12):

Step 1: The Development of an Overarching Well-being Framework.

Step 2: Utilising the Framework to Report Progress.

Step 3: Help set the agenda and high-level priorities in order to inform efforts to improve the overall impact of public policy on people's lives.

Step 4: Utilising the framework over time to better understand complex policy challenges, including as part of the budgetary process, in order to inform, consider and examine the design, implementation and evaluation of more effective public policies and programmes.

The Overarching Well-being Framework consists of 11 Dimensions:

1. Subjective Well-being
2. Mental and Physical Health
3. Knowledge and Skills
4. Income and Wealth
5. Housing and Local Area
6. Environment, Climate and Biodiversity
7. Safety and Security
8. Work and Job Quality
9. Time Use

10. Community, Social Connections and Cultural Participation
11. Civic Engagement and Cultural Expression

These were then further grouped to show interconnectedness under the headings 'Person' (Income and Wealth, Knowledge and Skills, Mental and Physical Health, and Subjective Well-being), 'Place' (Housing and Local Area, Safety and Security, and Environment, Climate and Biodiversity), and 'Society' (Work and Job Quality, Time Use, Community, Social Connections and Cultural Participation, and Civic Engagement and Cultural Expression) (2021, p. 17).

A 'Wellbeing Dashboard' was then developed to provide a snapshot of progress. In developing the Dashboard, the Inter-Departmental Working Group established a list of 35 indicators chosen to be balanced, add value or be of policy relevance, provide for aggregation and dis-aggregation, be readily available and of sufficient quality, and be internationally comparable (p. 35).

In October 2021, the Government of Ireland also launched a public conversation on the Wellbeing Framework for Ireland to "create awareness, test the framework, and get a sense of people's priorities"[1]. This was followed by the development of the Well-being Portal[2] and the CSO's Wellbeing Information Hub[3].

The Second Report on the Wellbeing Framework in Ireland (Government of Ireland, 2022) refined the overarching vision and goals of the Framework "to emphasise mental health, broader skills across the life cycle (rather than formal education), protection of Ireland's environment, climate and biodiversity and a focus on open government with which citizens can meaningfully engage." (p.14).

The Overarching Vision and Goals are now stated as follows:

- Enable people to have purposeful lives that support good physical and mental health, enabling the development of skills across the life cycle and providing a good standard of living;

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1 gov.ie - Public Conversation - Well-being Framework (www.gov.ie)
2 https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/1fb9b-a-wellbeing-framework-for-ireland-join-the-conversation/?referrer=http://www.gov.ie/wellbeing-framework/
3 https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-wbhub/well-beinginformationhub/

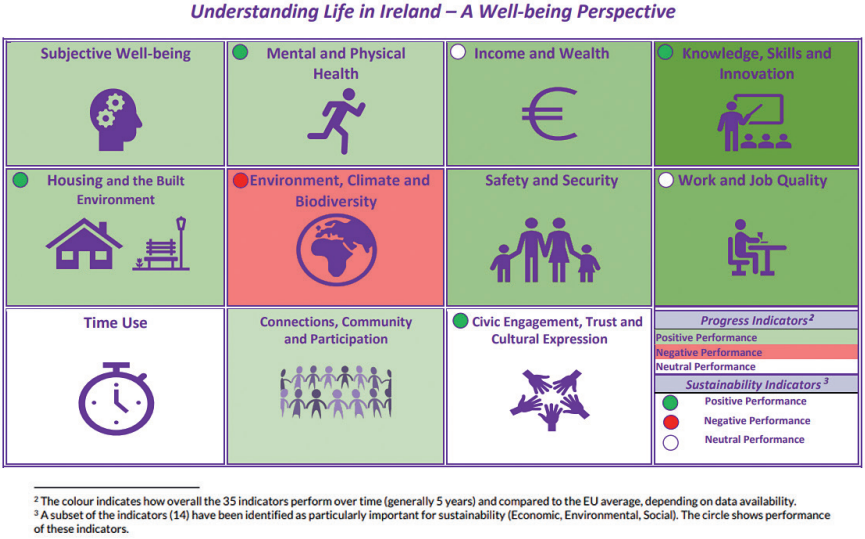
- Ensure a sustainable sense of place, including an appropriate and safe place to live and protection of Ireland's environment, climate and biodiversity;
- Preserve balance, inclusivity and equality of opportunities across society with open and effective government, empowering families, friends and communities to grow, connect and meaningfully engage.

(Government of Ireland, 2022, p. 14)

Wellbeing Dashboard

It is the Report on the Well-being Dashboard that we will focus on in this paper which is understood to present a "generally positive picture of quality of life in Ireland" (Government of Ireland, 2022a, p. 3), while pointing to areas that need improvement. The Dashboard itself is based on the 11 dimensions referred to above and the 35 indicators selected from the range of CSO datasets using the criteria set out in the First Report.

Figure 1: Well-being Dashboard



[2] The colour indicates how overall the 35 indicators perform over time (generally 5 years) and compared to the EU average, depending on data availability.
[3] A subset of the indicators (14) have been identified as particularly important for sustainability (Economic, Environmental, Social). The circle shows performance of these indicators.

Source: Understanding Life in Ireland: The Well-being Dashboard 2022, p.5

Figure 1 contains the snapshot of the Well-being Dashboard contained in the 2022 Report (Government of Ireland, 2022a, p. 5), which gives a clear overview of where the data suggest progress has been made and where improvements are needed. There are two types of indicators, the Progress Indicators, denoted as colours in each box, refers to how the indicators perform over a 5 year period and compared to the EU average, depending on data availability; while the Sustainability Indicators, denoted as coloured circles in the top-left of each of seven boxes, refers to a subset of the 35 indicators (consisting of 14 indicators) which have been identified as particularly important for sustainability. The indicators are then colour-coded: green as positive, red as negative, and white as neutral.

At first glance it appears that Ireland is doing extremely well, with Positive Performance recorded for eight of the 11 Performance Indicators, Neutral Performance for two, and Negative Performance for just one. Of the seven Sustainability Indicators, Positive Performance is recorded for four, Neutral Performance for two and Negative Performance for just one.

Anyone engaged in work on health, poverty, educational disadvantage or housing might find these indicators surprising.

What is included in the Indicators?

The Report on the Well-being Dashboard provides the information behind each of the indicators used to determine progress on each of the dimensions. Taking each one at a time, we begin to get a better understanding of how progress is being recorded in this way.

Subjective Well-being

Three indicators were used to assess progress under this dimension: Population Rating their Overall Life Satisfaction as High; Population who did not Feel Depressed or Downhearted in the Last 4 Weeks; and School Aged Children who report being Happy with their Life at Present.

The data relating to the proportion of the population rating their overall life satisfaction as high relates to 2018. At 44.4 per cent, Ireland's rate was much higher than the EU-average of 25 per cent. From an Irish perspective, between 2013 to 2018, the proportion increased from 30.8 per cent to 44.4 per cent. Therefore, this indicator is coded green for progress. So far, so positive. However, these data are taken from a Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) module that was last published four years ago, before the pandemic and cost of

living crisis, and the comparative data is from 2013, when the impact of austerity following the 2008 crash was keenly felt.

The proportion of the population who did not feel depressed or downhearted in the last 4 weeks has also increased between 2013 and 2018 (with similar caveats regarding timing as the previous dataset). This indicator was, therefore, also coded green. The CSO provide an additional analysis of this dataset on the Wellbeing Hub, with a breakdown by poverty status for each year. This shows that the gap between the proportion of people who were not at risk of poverty who did not feel depressed or downhearted and those who were at risk of poverty and experiencing the same feelings has widened. This gap was 6.6pps in 2013, compared to 15.3pps in 2018. This indicates that the experience of those in poverty worsened in 2018 comparative to those who were not. In a comparison with other EU-28 countries[4], Ireland comes third for the proportion of the population who did not feel depressed or downhearted in the previous 4 weeks, behind Slovenia and the Czech Republic, and ahead of Malta and Latvia as the top 5 countries (European Commission, 2020). In fact, Ireland is an outlier compared to the EU-15, having a proportion of the population who had not felt depressed or downhearted in the past 4 weeks which was 5.8pps higher than the next highest ranking EU-15 country (61.2 per cent compared to Denmark with 55.4 per cent).

The final indicator in the Subjective Well-being dimension relates to school aged children who report being happy with their life. The number of children aged 10-17 who reported feeling happy with their life at present decreased between 2010 and 2018, particularly among girls. This indicator is coded red. It is also interesting to note that the CSO dataset for this indicator includes data for 2014 and shows a reduction in happiness among boys between 2010 and 2014, before increasing again, while the proportion of girls who reported being happy with their lives reduced each period. Looking at individual ages (11-17) within the dataset, girls in mid-high teens experienced the most significant decreases in happiness (Table 1).

[4] European datasets that pre-date 2020 will include the UK

Table 1: Girls who report being happy with their lives at present, by age 11-17, 2010 to 2018

Age	2010	2014	2018
11 years	94.0	95.0	93.7
12 years	95.6	96.0	91.9
13 years	93.8	92.2	85.7
14 years	90.1	91.9	78.3
15 years	88.9	90.1	77.8
16 years	91.8	89.4	77.6
17 years	91.6	91.0	80.9

Source: CSO SCA16 – Well-being and Life Satisfaction of Children 10-17

Overall, because two of the three indicators were coded green, this dimension was coded green for progress being made.

Mental and Physical Health

This is also an area that has been coded green for progress on the basis of three indicators, albeit the narrative does refer to "a mixed picture" (p.7). The indicators used here are Healthy Life Years; Population reporting depression; and Unmet need for medical attention.

Healthy life years measures how long, in years, a person is expected to live a healthy life. In 2020, Ireland had the sixth highest healthy life years in the EU, at just over 66 years. In 2019 (when we ranked fifth in the EU), the number of healthy life years was 69.6. A break in time series in the EU-SILC[5] means that a direct comparison between 2019 and 2020 cannot be made, however it is likely that the impact of Covid-19 will result in a reduction. Therefore, we would suggest that this indicator should be coded white for neutral rather than green for progress.

The next indicator relates to the proportion of people aged 15+ reporting mild, moderate or severe depression was 14 per cent in 2019. This is marked white for neutral as there is no EU comparator dataset. The Irish Health Survey 2019, from which this dataset is taken, breaks these data down by employment status and

[5] That is, a change in the methodology used in the EU SILC Survey for 2020.

finds that people who are unemployed are more than twice as likely to report feeling mild, moderate or severe depression (21 per cent) than people who are in employment (9 per cent) (CSO, 2019).

And finally, the proportion of people aged 15+ with self-reported unmet need for medical attention. This is referenced in the report as "unmet need for medical examination or care due to financial, geographic or waiting time reasons" taken from the EU-SILC database[6] which refers to just 2 per cent in 2020. The proportion reported by Eurostat has remained static since 2018 and is the same as the European average in 2021. This indicator is coded yellow as it performed positively over time, but compared negatively against the EU average. However, the Irish Health Survey 2019 indicates that while 2 per cent of the population reported an unmet need for health care due to transport or distance, 14 per cent of the population reported an unmet need due to waiting times (CSO, 2019). The proportion for people who were classified as "very disadvantaged" increases to 18 per cent, almost double that of "very affluent" people (10 per cent).

The number of people currently[7] awaiting outpatient treatment in Ireland is 625,679 compared to 568,769 in September 2019, and 438,267 in September 2016. An increase of 43 per cent in outpatient waiting lists would suggest that this indicator should be red.

Income and Wealth

The next dimension is Income and Wealth. This dimension contains four indicators: median real household income; median net wealth; households making ends meet with great difficulty; and Government net wealth. The overall dimension is coded green.

Median real household income, again using EU-SILC data, increased by 22 per cent from 2014 to 2019. While not comparable due to a break in the time series, there was also an increase in median real household income between 2020 and 2021, from €43,915 to €46,627. At an EU level, the indicator is median equivalised household income. In 2021, Ireland ranked third in the EU at €28,130, behind Denmark (€32,088) and the Netherlands (€28,431). This indicator is coded green.

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6 [sdg_03_60]

7 As at 29th September 2022, www.ntpf.ie

The median household net wealth increased between 2013 (€102,600) and 2018 (€178,400) and again in 2020 (€193,100) based on the Household Finance and Consumption Survey (CSO, 2020). Not included in the report, but again of relevance to Wellbeing, is disparity of household wealth depending on household characteristic. For example, rented households had a median household net wealth of just €5,300 compared to owner occupied households with a net wealth of €303,900. Two adult households with at least one aged 65+ had the highest median household net wealth at €361,800, while one adult households with children had a median household net wealth of just €4,000.

At an EU level, Ireland is reported to have the fifth-highest median net wealth across the Eurozone countries in 2017. This indicator is coded green.

The proportion of people having difficulty making ends meet has decreased to 7.5 per cent in 2019 (and to 5.6 per cent in 2021) and compared favourably to the EU average in 2020 (6.1 per cent compared to 7.6 per cent). As with other indicators, this varies considerably depending on household type. In 2021, the proportion of the population experiencing difficulties making ends meet was 5.6 per cent, compared to 15.9 per cent of households with one adult and children under 18. This indicator is coded green.

Finally in this dimension, we move on to Government Net Wealth. This indicator is based on the Government's financial position which worsened from -€152,110m in 2016 to -€169,158m in 2021, much of which is being attributed to increased spending on the pandemic response. *Social Justice Ireland* have argued that pandemic-related debt should be warehoused on a long-term basis, which would keep servicing costs low (Social Justice Ireland, 2020). This indicator is coded red.

Knowledge, Skills and Innovation

This dimension has three indicators: reading and maths performance in 15-year-olds; lifelong learning rate; and Research and Development personnel.

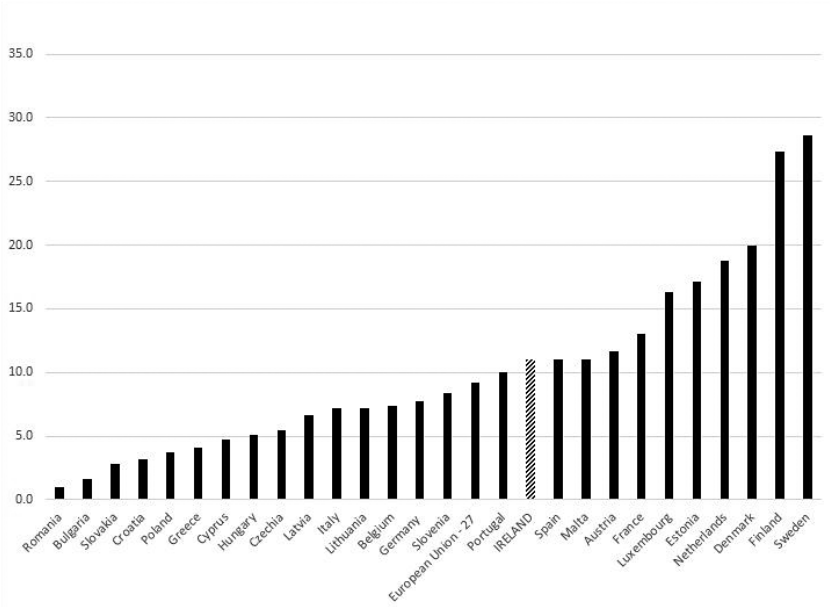
Data on the reading and maths performance in 15-year-olds is taken from the OECD PISA[8] scores. While Ireland consistently ranks among the highest in these tests, this masks lower performance by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. An analysis of trends in PISA achievement indicates that

[8] The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. PISA measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges.

in reading, mathematics and science, students in DEIS schools have consistently achieved significantly lower average achievement than students in non-DEIS schools across all PISA cycles examined (Gilleece, 2020). This indicator is coded green.

Participation in lifelong learning has improved between 2016 and 2021 as indicated in the report, however the participation rate of 11.5 per cent in 2021 is 1.5pps below the 2019 level of 13 per cent, and is 3.5pps below the national target of 15 per cent by 2025. At an EU level, Ireland ranked joint 9th with Spain and Malta in 2020 (Chart 1). This indicator is coded green.

Chart 1: EU-28 Lifelong Learning Participation Rates, 2020



Source: Eurostat (2022), Social Justice Ireland Socio-economic Review: a 2022 guide to a fairer Irish society.

Finally under this dimension, the report refers to the number of people working in research in business, education and public service, which has increased by 5.8 per cent between 2015 and 2019. At an EU level, Ireland has a higher proportion

of the population engaged in research as a proportion of total employment than the EU average. This indicator is coded green.

Housing and the Built Environment

This dimension contains four indicators: new dwelling completions; A or B domestic dwelling energy rating; at risk of poverty rate after rent and mortgage interest; and average distance to everyday services. Overall, this dimension is coded green for progress.

The first indicator, new dwelling completions, has shown improvement in the past five years, increasing from 14,319 in 2017 to 20,570 in 2021, however it has been decreasing since 2019 (when it was 21,147). However, the report also refers to the target of 33,000 set out in Housing for All being missed. The indicator is coded green.

The number of BER rated buildings with a rating of A or B has increased from 12,650 in 2016 to 31,571 in 2021. This indicator is coded green.

Housing affordability is considered on the basis of the at risk of poverty rate after rent or mortgage interest which has remained relatively static between 2021 (19 per cent) and 2020 (19.3 per cent) and below the EU average of 30 per cent. However there seems to be a discrepancy in how the data is presented here. The rates for Ireland are taken from the CSO SILC release (CSO, 2022) which refers to rent and mortgage interest only, whereas the EU average is extracted from on a Eurostat database[9] which refers to housing costs, and according to which Ireland's at risk of poverty rate in 2021 was 25.3 per cent. As shown in our *Housing Costs and Poverty 2022* briefing (Social Justice Ireland, 2022a), there is a large difference between the poverty rates of renters and owner occupiers after rent and mortgage interest has been paid. Among renters, those in receipt of a housing subsidy have the highest poverty rate at 59.1 per cent. This indicator is coded green.

The dataset on average distance to everyday services is taken from Census 2016, only relates to Ireland, and has no comparative historical data. This indicator is coded white.

[9] Eurostat - Data Explorer (europa.eu)

Environment, Climate and Biodiversity

This dimension also contains four indicators: pollution, grime or other environmental problems; water bodies assessed as 'High' or 'Good'; Greenhouse gas emissions; and Proportion of waste to landfill. This dimension is referred to within the report as the "only overall negative picture across the dimensions of the dashboard" (p.10). The overall code for this dimension is red.

The proportion of people who experience pollution, grime or other environmental problems in their area, according to EU-SILC, increased between 2014 (4.7 per cent) and 2019 (6 per cent) and, with a break in the time series of the data, rose again to 8.2 per cent in 2020. This compares to an EU average of 13.7 per cent. This indicator is coded yellow.

The proportion of rivers assessed as having high or good ambient water quality has decreased between the periods 2010-2012 (60 per cent), 2010-2015 (57 per cent), and 2013-2018 (53 per cent). This indicator is coded red.

Greenhouse gas emissions are also increasing, by 1.7 million tonnes between 2014 and 2019 according to the report and are high by EU standards (second only to Luxembourg). While there was a short-term reduction in emissions because of restrictions on travel due to the pandemic, Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions increased by 4.7 per cent in 2021 compared to 2020 and are now 1.1 per cent above 2019 pre-Covid 19 restriction levels[10]. This indicator is coded red.

And finally, under this dimension, the proportion of waste to landfill has shown significant improvement between 2009 (58.4 per cent) and 2019 (15.3 per cent). While estimates show an increase in 2020 to 22.5 per cent, this is in line with the EU average and this indicator is coded green.

Safety and Security

The next dimension relates to safety and security based on a set of three indicators: murder rate per 100,000 of the population; persons killed or injured on the roads; and population who worry they could be a victim of a crime. The overall code for this dimension is green.

The report points to a reduction in the rate of murder per 100,000 of the population from 0.7 in 2006 to 0.46 in 2021; a reduction in the number of people killed on the roads between 2014 (192) and 2019 (140) (while the number

[10] News Releases 2022 | Environmental Protection Agency (epa.ie)

injured has remained relatively static); and the proportion of people who worry that they could be the victim of a crime (15 to 23 per cent, depending on the crime) taken from the CSO's Crime and Victimisation Report 2019 (CSO, 2019). The first two indicators are coded green while the last is coded white as there is no comparative data available.

This is an interesting selection given that the most prevalent type of crime ("offence group") reported in the latest statistics was Theft & Related Offences, with 57,229 offences in the year to Q2 2022 and an increase of 22.6 per cent on the previous year (CSO, 2022)[11]. Of the 14 offence groups detailed in the CSO release, just three have decreased between Q2 2021 and Q2 2022: Homicide & Related Offences (-37.5 per cent); Controlled Drug Offences (-26.8 per cent); and Weapons and Explosives Offences (-11.2 per cent). All other offence groups increased in the period, with the highest proportionate increase reported in Fraud, Deception and Related Offences (43.1 per cent) (Table 2).

[11] These statistics are published "under reservation" by the CSO due to data quality issues with the PULSE system. For more information, see https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/crime/statisticsunderreservationfaqs/

Table 2: Recorded crime incidents[1] classified by offence group, annualised[2] total to Q2 2021 and 2022

ICCSq Offence Group	Annualised total to Q2			
	2021	2022	Change	% Change
01 Homicide & Related offences	64	40	-24	*-37.5*
02 Sexual offences	3,312	3,499	187	*5.6*
03 Attempts/Threats to Murder, Assaults, Harassments & Related offences	18,872	22,765	3,893	*20.6*
04 Dangerous or Negligent Acts	8,460	8,790	330	*3.9*
05 Kidnapping & Related offences	124	169	45	*36.3*
06 Robbery, Extortion & Hijacking offences	1,694	1,917	223	*13.2*
07 Burglary & Related offences	9,008	9,828	820	*9.1*
08 Theft & Related offences	46,670	57,229	10,559	*22.6*
09 Fraud, Deception & Related offences	11,325	16,202	4,877	*43.1*
10 Controlled Drug offences	22,851	16,718	-6,133	*-26.8*
11 Weapons & Explosives offences	2,811	2,497	-314	*-11.2*
12 Damage to Property & to the Environment	19,231	20,714	1,483	*7.7*
13 Public Order & Other Social Code offences	27,879	30,632	2,753	*9.9*
15 Offences against Government, Justice Procedures & Organisation of Crime	10,919	12,498	1,579	*14.5*

[1] These statistics are categorised as Under Reservation. This categorisation indicates that the quality of these statistics do not meet the standards required of official statistics published by CSO.

[2] The annualised figure for a given quarter is the total number of crimes recorded in the 12 months prior to end of that quarter.

Source: Central Statistics Office (2022) Recorded Crime Q2 2022, www.cso.ie

Work and Job Quality

This dimension consists of three indicators: labour underutilisation rate; employment rate; and mean weekly earnings. While the explanation of the dimension refers to "The productive activities (both paid and unpaid) that shape

how an individual progresses through their life...", the indicators refer only to labour market participation. The overall coding for this dimension is green.

Labour underutilisation refers to the "number of persons classified as unemployed, plus those classified as part-time under employed, plus those outside the labour force who are available for work but not seeking work as a percentage share of the total labour force" (p.12). This indicator is coded yellow as the rate in Q4 2021 (12.4 per cent) was approximately the same as Q4 2016 (12.2 per cent) and the EU average.

The employment rate has rebounded from the pandemic and now stands at 72.8 per cent as at Q1 2022, increasing from 66.9 per cent in Q1 2017. This is 3.6pps above the EU average (69.2 per cent). While this is very welcome, labour force participation rates are still lower than ideal, particularly in relation to female labour market participation which is well below the levels it should be reaching. The gender gap, of ten percentage points in 2021, illustrates this outcome clearly (Table 3). This indicator is coded green.

Table 3: Labour Force Participation Rates by Gender, 2011-2021

	2011	2019	2021	Change 11-21
Both sexes	61.8	62.6	65.1	+3.3
Males	69.2	68.9	70.3	+1.1
Females	54.7	56.5	60.1	+5.4
Gender Gap*	**14.5**	**12.4**	**10.2**	

Source: CSO, LFS on-line database.

*Note: * the gender gap is the difference in percentage points between male and female participation levels.*

And finally in this dimension, mean weekly earnings. These have increased from €717.52 in Q4 2016 to €863.70 in Q4 2021. However, average figures conceal inequality. For example, in Q2 2022, average weekly earnings were €871.62, with a range from €404.80 in the Accommodation and Food sector (19.5 per cent below the Living Wage of €503.10 for a 39-hour week) to €1,442.80 in the Information and Communication sector[12]. This indicator is coded green.

[12] CSO Px Stat EHQ03

It is disappointing to note that in the context of a wellbeing dimension on work and job quality, that there is no indicator to measure other types of work (that is, not derived from paid employment) or the quality of employment.

Time Use

This is the first of two dimensions to be coded white overall as having 'neutral' progress. The indicators here consist of long working hours in main job; providing at least 20 hours of care per week; and population satisfied with leisure time.

According to the report, the proportion of people who work 49 hours per week or more increased from 8.6 per cent in Q4 2016 to 11.1 in Q4 2017, before decreasing to 9.5 per cent in Q4 2021. Eurostat also uses the threshold of 49 hours per week or more in its dataset on the proportion of people working "very long hours in main job". According to that dataset, 8.6 per cent of Irish people worked very long hours in their main job in 2021, compared to an EU-27 average of 7.4 per cent. This indicator is coded red.

The indicator for carers providing at least 20 hours of care per week is coded white due to lack of comparative data. According to the CSO's Irish Health Survey 2019 – Carers and Social Supports (CSO, 2019), 31 per cent of people aged 15+ provided at least 20 hours of care. There is both a gender and age-related dimension, with a higher proportion of women (37 per cent) than men (23 per cent) providing this level of care, and 51 per cent of people aged 75+: the highest proportion across all age groups. This indicator is coded white.

The final indicator under this dimension relates to the population satisfied with leisure time. This is coded green due to the slight increase between 2013 and 2018 (from 7 per cent to 7.5 out of 10), and the favourable comparison at a European level, where Ireland ranks third highest. While the data accompanying this indicator on the CSO Wellbeing Dashboard also indicates an improvement in the proportion of the population with a high score (9-10) regarding satisfaction with leisure time use, from 29 per cent of people in 2013 to 34.7 per cent in 2018, it also highlights some causes for concern. The gender gap has increased from 1.1pps in 2013 to 3.5pps in 2018, and households with children (both one and two adult households) continue to have the lowest proportion.

Connections, Community and Participation

This dimension contains just two indicators: Population who feel lonely; and Population with at least two people they can rely on. Overall, the dimension

is coded green notwithstanding the fact that the report refers to difficulties in assessing high-level progress as both are only available for one reference period (p.13).

The proportion of the population who reported feeling lonely at least some of the time was 16.6 per cent in 2018. Due to a lack of comparative data, this indicator is coded white.

The second indicator in this dimension relates to the proportion of the population with at least two people they can rely on. In 2019, the only year for which this data was gathered to date, the rate was 77 per cent. This indicator is coded green on the basis of an indicator in the OECD Better Life Index which measures the proportion of people who believe they can rely on their friends in case of need where Ireland (96 per cent) ranks joint third with Finland and Norway behind Iceland and the Czech Republic.

The text underpinning this dimension refers to connection to the community through volunteering or other community activities yet contains no indicators to measure this.

Civic Engagement, Trust, and Cultural Expression

The eleventh dimension relates to civic engagement, trust, and cultural expression. Specifically, the "rights and opportunities an individual has to impact the political functioning of their society, the existence of institutional arrangements that foster cooperation and freedom of expression of identity and non-discrimination, and trust in those institutions and across broader society" (p14).

The overall coding for this dimension is white based on the "mixed picture" presented by the three indicators: Persons who experienced discrimination in the last two years; satisfaction with how democracy works in Ireland; and perceived social inclusion.

The proportion of the population who experienced discrimination in the previous two years increased by 50 per cent between Q1 2014 (12 per cent) and Q1 2019 (18 per cent). The proportion of people of "other stated religions" who experienced discrimination in Q1 2019 (29 per cent) was more than twice that of Roman Catholics (14 per cent) and 11pps higher than the general population (18 per cent). Unemployed people were most likely to experience discrimination (30 per cent) and almost twice as likely as people in employment (17 per cent).

And the proportion of non-Irish nationals experiencing discrimination was 11pps higher than Irish nationals and 9pps higher than the general population. This indicator is coded red.

The proportion of people who stated that they were satisfied with how democracy works in Ireland was 76 per cent in Spring 2021, which was fifth highest in Europe. However, there is a significant difference between this and the proportion of the population who responded positively to the questions "How much trust do you have in the national Government / national Parliament?" asked on behalf of the European Commission as part of the Standard Eurobarometer in Summer 2022. Just 46 per cent responded that they "tended to trust" the national Government, compared to 49 per cent who tended not to; while 44 per cent tended to trust the national Parliament, compared to 49 per cent who did not (European Commission, 2022). European comparison is also available within this dataset. Ireland (at 46 per cent) ranks comparatively highly (8th) and is 12pps ahead of the EU-27 average in terms of trusting national Government and ranks 9th in terms of trusting the national Parliament, 10pps above the EU-27 average. This indicator is coded green.

Finally, we turn to perceived social inclusion, where Ireland scores 7.5 out of 10. Students have the highest social inclusion score (8), while people who are unable to work due to permanent sickness / disability (6.3) and the unemployed (6.4) had the lowest. This data is extracted from the SILC Wellbeing Module which contains data for 2018 only. Therefore, this indicator is coded white.

What Counts?

The number and selection of indicators was an attempt not to complicate the Dashboard and to give a 'snapshot' of Well-being in Ireland generally. The Central Statistics Office has a vast collection of datasets that could apply to the dimensions, many, we would suggest, would provide proximation of real Well-being, that is, how policies are being experienced.

To gauge public opinion on what matters, and what should therefore be counted as an indicator of Well-being, *Social Justice Ireland* produced a survey asking people to rank a set of six indicators under each of the Well-being Framework dimensions from one to six, with one being the least important and six being the most important. The six indicators included the indicators used in the Dashboard and datasets readily available from the CSO and other reputable sources.

This survey was circulated over the Summer months through our social media channels, our Weekly Digest, and our Members Bulletin. Some 236 responses were received. Using these responses, we have selected a series of alternative indicators under each of the 11 dimensions. The Second Report on the Wellbeing Framework, referred to earlier in this paper, also identified equality as the "central pillar of the Wellbeing Framework"(p.16) and our analysis of the data will be through an equality lens.

Subjective Wellbeing

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Overall life satisfaction; Social Inclusion; and Access to Public Services.

The data relating to the proportion of the population rating their overall life satisfaction as high was referenced earlier. Overall, Ireland, with a rate of 44.4 per cent in 2018, increasing from 30.8 per cent in 2013 and comparing well to the EU average, appears to be doing well. The CSO dataset is further broken down by age group and self-perceived health status. Using health status as a proxy for marginalisation, we look at the gap between the proportion of those who reported their health as 'Very Good' and those who reported it as 'Fair/Bad/Very Bad' with an overall life satisfaction rating of 'High'. Between 2013 and 2018, the gap increased from 19.7pps to 34.7pps[13]. Those with poorer health are falling further behind. At a European level, the data may be disaggregated by educational attainment level. Using lowest and highest educational attainment as a proxy (there is a strong correlation between educational attainment and reduced poverty risk), Ireland compares well, having the highest rate of life satisfaction among the population with the lowest educational attainment, and the sixth lowest gap between lowest and highest educational attainment. This indicator is therefore coded white.

On social inclusion, we noted earlier the data which scores 7.5 out of 10 and its limitations in this context. At a European level, Ireland compares well for the proportion of the population with some or severe self-perceived long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health problems at 16.4 per cent in 2019, the fourth lowest across the EU 28[14], down from 17.6 per cent in 2014[15]. This indicator is coded green.

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13 https://data.cso.ie/table/WBA38
14 Data unavailable for the UK for 2019
15 [HLTH_SILC_12] - Eurostat

Finally under this dimension we turn to access to public services. This data is based on the CSO Trust Survey which includes a rating of satisfaction with public services (CSO, 2022). While this indicator must be coded white as it relates to one year only, the proportion of the population who are satisfied with the Administrative Services and Education System are quite high (at 63 and 70 per cent respectively), while just 32 per cent were satisfied with the Health System.

Overall, this dimension is coded white.

Mental and Physical Health

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Inability to afford adequate healthcare; Outpatient and In-patient Waiting Lists; and Self-reported unmet need for medical attention.

As stated above, the Irish Health Survey 2019 indicates that while two per cent of the population reported an unmet need for health care due to transport or distance, 14 per cent of the population reported an unmet need due to waiting times (CSO, 2019). The proportion for people who were classified as "very disadvantaged" increases to 18 per cent, almost double that of "very affluent" people (10 per cent). On the basis of equality, this indicator is coded red.

The number of people currently[16] awaiting outpatient treatment in Ireland is 625,679 compared to 568,769 in September 2019, and 438,267 in September 2016. An increase of 43 per cent in outpatient waiting lists over six years. A similar pattern emerges in respect of inpatient waiting lists, with 26,509 people awaiting treatment in September 2022 compared to 22,197 in September 2019 and 17,984 in September 2016, a 47 per cent increase between 2016 and 2022. This indicator is coded red.

The final indicator in this dimension is as per the Wellbeing Dashboard. As stated above, the proportion of people aged 15+ with self-reported unmet need for medical attention is just 2 per cent in 2020 overall, and has remained static since 2018, and is in line with the EU average. This indicator is coded yellow.

Overall, this dimension is coded red.

[16] As at 29th September 2022, www.ntpf.ie

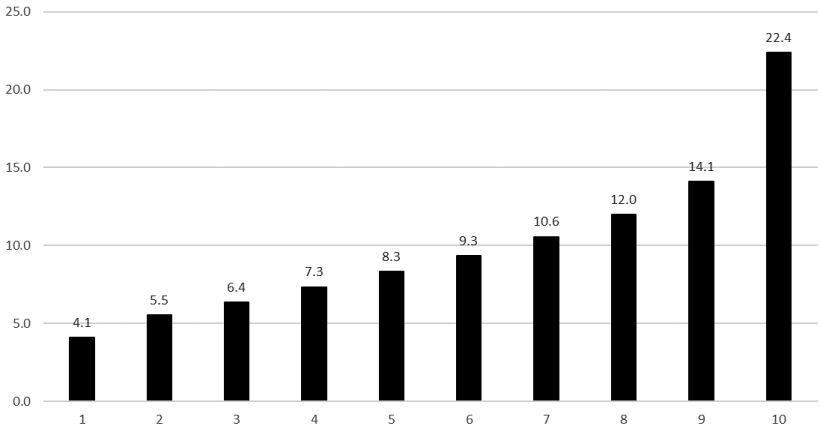
Income and Wealth

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Poverty Risk of the population; Income Equality / Inequality; Median real household disposable income.

The period from 2016 onwards has been one of notable decline in the level of poverty. This has seen the proportion of the population in poverty fall from 16.2 per cent in 2016 to a 11.6 per cent in the latest SILC survey. *Social Justice Ireland* warmly welcomes this progress. It reflects a dividend from Budget policy over the period from 2016 which, for the most part, distributed resources more generously to welfare dependent households. Our consistent message in advance of these Budgets was to reverse the regressivity of previous policy choices and to prioritise those households with the least resources and the most needs. We therefore regret choices made in more recent Budgets where increases to core welfare rates did not keep pace with inflation. From a European perspective, Eurostat produces comparable 'at risk of poverty' figures (proportions of the population living below the poverty line) for each EU member state. The data is calculated using the 60 per cent of median income poverty line in each country. Comparable EU-wide definitions of income and equivalence scale are used - note these slightly differ from national definitions. The latest data available for all member states is for the year 2021 when the average risk of poverty in the EU-27 was 16.8 per cent. Ireland has a below average risk of poverty when compared to all other EU member states. Eurostat's 2008 figures marked the first time Ireland's poverty levels fell below average EU levels. This indicator is coded green.

The most recent data on Ireland's income distribution, from the 2021 SILC survey (published in May 2022), is summarised in Chart 2. It examines the income distribution by decile starting with the 10 per cent of individuals with the lowest income (the bottom decile) up to the 10 per cent with the highest income (the top decile). The data presented is equivalised, meaning that it has been adjusted to reflect the number of adults and children in a household and to make it possible to compare individuals located in households of different sizes and compositions. It measures disposable income which captures the amount of money available to spend after receipt of any employment/pension income, payment of all income taxes, and receipt of any welfare entitlements. In 2021, the top 10 per cent of the population received more than one fifth of the total income while the bottom decile received just 4.1 per cent. Collectively, the poorest 50 per cent of households received a lower share (31.7 per cent) to the top 20 per cent (36.5 per cent). Overall, the share of the top 10 per cent is almost 6 times the share of the bottom 10 per cent.

Chart 2: Ireland's Income Distribution by decile (or 10% group) in 2021



Source: *CSO SILC (2022)*

Income distribution data for the last few decades suggested that the overall structure of that distribution has been largely unchanged. One overall inequality measure, the Gini coefficient, ranges from 0 (no inequality) to 100 (maximum inequality) and has stood at approximately 30 for Ireland for some time. In 2021 it stood at 27. This indicator is coded red.

As stated above, median real household income increased by 22 per cent from 2014 to 2019. While not comparable due to a break in the time series, there was also an increase in median real household income between 2020 and 2021, from €43,915 to €46,627. Not included in the report, but of relevance to Well-being, is how income is distributed by household type. A one adult household had a median real household income of €23,233 in 2021 (down from €23,628 in 2020), while a household with three or more adults had a median real household income of €77,732 (up from €75,285)[17]. At an EU level, the indicator is median equivalised household income. In 2021, Ireland ranked third in the EU at €28,130, behind Denmark (€32,088) and the Netherlands (€28,431). This indicator is coded white.

[17] CSO PxStat SIA64

Overall, this dimension is coded white.

Knowledge, Skills and Innovation

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Early School Leavers; Lifelong learning rate; and Digital Literacy.

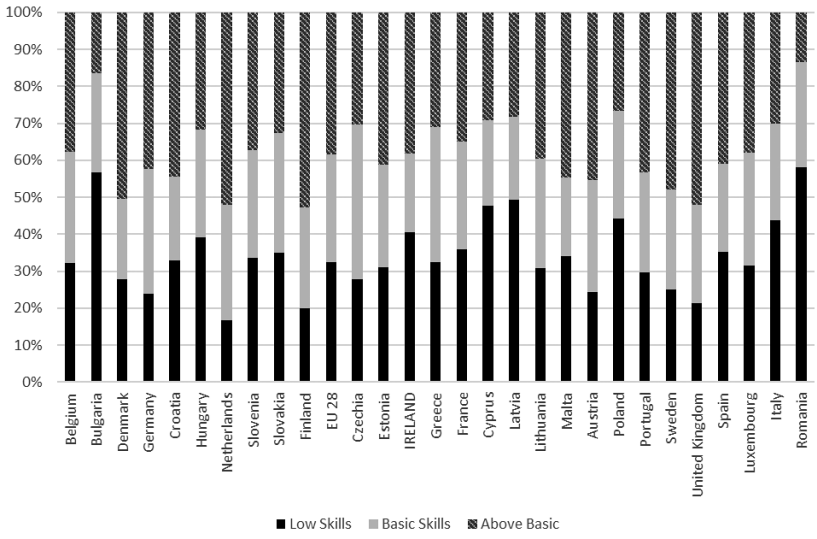
Ireland has the fourth lowest early school leaving rate in the European Union at five per cent and Ireland ranked second in the European Union for the percentage of people aged 20-24 with at least upper-second level education at 94 per cent (CSO, 2019). This downward trend of early school leaving is a welcome development and Ireland has surpassed the national target set under the Europe 2020 Strategy. This indicator is coded green.

On lifelong learning, as stated earlier, this has improved between 2016 and 2021 as indicated in the report, however the participation rate of 11.5 per cent in 2021 is 1.5pps below the 2019 level of 13 per cent and is 3.5pps below the national target of 15 per cent by 2025. At an EU level, Ireland ranked joint 9th with Spain and Malta (not 10th as stated in the report) (Chart 1 above). This indicator is coded green.

Ireland's performance on digital skills is concerning (Chart 3). Over 55 per cent of the population have low or basic digital skills. Over one third of the adult population (36 per cent) has low digital skills, well above the EU average (28 per cent). Only one fifth of the population have basic digital skills. This general gap in digital skills is also confirmed by the OECD PIAAC[18] survey of adult learning. Clearly one implication is that expenditure on training will have to increase, especially if we are to meet our digital literacy target. Across the OECD average spending on training for the unemployed and workers at risk of involuntary unemployment is only 0.13 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). This indicator is coded white.

[18] The OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) is a programme of assessment and analysis of adult skills.

Chart 3: EU-28 Digital Skills Levels, 2019



Source: Eurostat (2021), Social Justice Ireland Socio-economic Review: a 2022 guide to a fairer Irish society.

Overall, this dimension is coded green.

Housing and the Built Environment

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Housing Affordability; At risk of poverty rate after rent and mortgage interest; Mortgage Debt Burden.

Housing affordability has worsened in recent years, becoming less affordable between 2013 and 2019, before recovering slightly in 2020 (Parliamentary Budget Office, 2022). However, it must be noted that an affordability calculation based on earnings in 2020 will be distorted as average earnings increased in response to lay-offs in lower-paid jobs during the pandemic. Between 2012 and 2020 house prices increased by 77 per cent, compared to wage growth of 23 per cent in the same period (Parliamentary Budget Office, 2022) and asking prices have increased by 14.4 per cent in the year to December 2021, just 10.3 per cent below the 2007 peak (Central Statistics Office, 2022). This indicator is coded red.

After accounting for mortgage interest and rent payments on the home, the overall poverty rate in 2021 increased to 19 per cent or 952,185, including 286,242 children. This is almost one million people, one in five of the total population, living below the poverty line, 370,851 of which are in poverty because of housing costs (Social Justice Ireland, 2022a). This indicator is coded white due to lack of comparative data to date.

Mortgage debt burden for those who are most at risk of homelessness refers to borrowers in mortgage arrears for over 10 years. The latest data indicates that 7,870 home mortgages were in arrears for over 10 years in June 2022 (5,860 primary dwelling house (PDH) mortgages and 2,010 buy to let (BTL)) (Central Bank of Ireland, 2022), an increase from 6,962 (4,701 PDH and 2,261 BTL) in June 2020. At a European level, Ireland had the second highest rate of arrears on mortgage or rent payments in the EU in 2021 (7 per cent), second only to Greece (8.5 per cent)[19]. This indicator is coded red.

Overall, this dimension is coded red.

Environment, Climate and Biodiversity

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Access to reliable, affordable and sustainable energy sources; Biodiversity loss; Proportion of the population able to keep their homes adequately warm; and Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

Ireland's fuel mix for electricity generation is still dominated by carbon-based fossil fuels, but the share of renewables is improving, reaching 42 per cent in 2020 (SEAI, 2021). However, Ireland is highly dependent on imported fossil fuels for energy, our import dependency was 72 per cent in 2020. This runs contrary to our targets of reducing emissions, increasing renewable energy, and eliminating our dependence on fossil fuels. In 2020 renewables made up 13 per cent of final energy consumption, well short of the 2020 target of 16 per cent. At a European level, Ireland ranks 7th from last for the share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption. This indicator is coded red.

In terms of biodiversity, Ireland has had the same number of Natura2000 sites (consisting of both Special Protected Areas (SPAs) under the EU Birds Directive and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the EU Habitats Directive) between 2014 and 2019 (923,000 hectares). The common and farmland bird

[19] Eurostat: [ilc_mdes06]

indices both improved between 2014 and 2019. While at a European level, Ireland had the fourth lowest proportion of total land area designated as terrestrial SPAs under the EU Birds Directive (at 6.2 per cent) and the eighth lowest rate of total land area designated as terrestrial Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the EU Habitats Directive at 10.2 per cent (CSO, 2021). This indicator is coded red.

The proportion of the population unable to keep their home adequately warm decreased from 8.9 per cent in 2014 to 4.9 per cent in 2019. While not comparable due to a break in the time series, the proportion decreased slightly between 2020 and 2021 (from 3.3 to 3.2 per cent). In European terms, Ireland ranks 17th in terms of proportion of the population unable to keep the home adequately warm at less than half the EU-27 average. This indicator is coded green.

Finally under this dimension, greenhouse gas emissions. As discussed earlier, greenhouse gas emissions are increasing, and this indicator is coded red.

Overall, this dimension is coded red.

Safety and Security

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Incidences of gender-based violence; Incidences of racism and/or discrimination; and Persons killed or injured on roads.

There is no standard recording of "gender-based violence", however the number of recorded crime instances related to sexual offences increased by 38.5 per cent between 2016 and 2021 (from 2,521 to 3,491), while Fraud and Theft Offences, including financial control, increased by 247 per cent (from 4,972 to 17,122)[20]. In a European context, data available from the European Institute of Gender Equality indicates that Ireland ranked 9th for the number of sexual assaults on women in 2021 and 6th for rape. This indicator is coded red.

As stated above, there has been a 50 per cent increase in the proportion of the population who experienced discrimination between Q1 2014 and Q1 2019. With non-Irish nationals, people from religions other than Roman Catholic, and the unemployed experiencing higher levels than the general population. This indicator is coded red.

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[20] These statistics are published "under reservation" by the CSO due to data quality issues with the PULSE system. For more information, see https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/crime/statisticsunderreservationfaqs/

As also stated above, the reduction in the number of people killed on the roads between 2014 (192) and 2019 (140) has decreased, while the number injured has remained relatively static. This indicator is coded green.

Overall, this dimension is coded red.

Work and Job Quality

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: In-work poverty; Mean weekly earnings; and No. of long-term unemployed.

The proportion of people in employment and at risk of poverty decreased from 5.69 per cent in 2014 to 4.4 per cent in 2019. While not comparable due to a change in time series, in 2020 this rate was 6.2 per cent, decreasing to 4.4 per cent in 2021, based on EU-SILC data. This indicator is coded green.

As noted above, mean weekly earnings have increased from €717.52 in Q4 2016 to €863.70 in Q4 2021. However, given the disparities in incomes highlighted, this indicator should be coded red in line with the emphasis on equality contained in the revised Wellbeing Framework.

The rate of long-term unemployment (over 12 months) decreased from 3.2 per cent in Q2 2017 to 1.1 per cent in Q2 2022 (CSO, 2022). This indicator is coded green.

Overall, this dimension is coded green.

Time Use

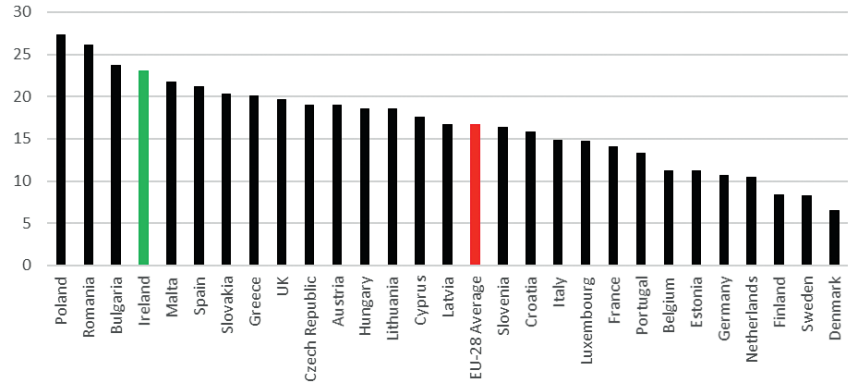
The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Long working hours in main job; Commuting Times; and Providing at least 20 hours of care per week.

As noted above, the proportion of people in Ireland working long hours in their main job increased between Q4 2016 and Q4 2021, and Ireland has a higher rate than the EU average. As with other aspects of the labour market included in the Wellbeing Framework, the average proportion conceals inequalities, with proportions ranging from 4.2 per cent of people employed in the Human health and social work activities sector to 46.6 per cent of people employed in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing sector. This indicator is coded red.

Average commuting times increased from 27.5 minutes in 2011 to 28.2 minutes in 2016 (CSO, 2017). At a European level, Ireland is joint third (with Belgium) in terms of length of average commuting time, at 28 minutes. While these datasets will likely have been impacted by changes to work arrangements resulting from the pandemic, based on these results this indicator is coded red.

While the data on caring relates to just one year, the gendered and age-related dimension must be considered. The Government's Wellbeing Dashboard report contains no data on the European level, however an article in the International Journal of Health Policy and Management, published in 2022 and based on data from 2016, contains some detail on the average weekly caregiving hours per carer and indicates that Irish carers were fourth in the EU-28 in terms of average weekly caregiving hours per carer (Chart 4) and had the highest Annual non-Professional Caregiving Value per Carer at €15,002 (followed by Luxembourg at €14,702 and the United Kingdom at €13,470) (Peña-Longobardo & Oliva-Moreno, 2022, pp. 2280-2281). We therefore code this indicator red.

Chart 4: Average Weekly Caregiving Hours per Carer, EU-28, 2016



Source: Extracted from Peña-Longobardo & Oliva-Moreno, 2022, pp.2280-2281

Connections, Community and Participation

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Population who feel lonely; Access to green / recreational space; and Population who have at least two people they can rely on.

As noted above, the proportion of the population who reported feeling lonely at least some of the time was 16.6 per cent in 2018. Studies on loneliness in Ireland have tended to concentrate on older people aged 50+ using data from the TILDA study[21], and indeed the CSO Report on this aspect in the SILC 2018 Module suggests that loneliness increases with age (with the exception of 16-24 year olds who have the second highest rate of loneliness). However learnings in respect of differences in social isolation among people living in urban or rural areas; loneliness by highest education achieved (Ward, May, Normand, Kenny, & Nolan, 2021) the impact of loneliness on health outcomes and mortality risk (Donovan & Blazer, 2020) (Burns, Leavey, & Ward, 2022), would be worthy of study at a population level. This indicator is coded white.

The CSO's Household Environmental Behaviours – Visits to Nature Areas Report Q3 2021 found Urban green spaces were the most popular type of green and natural space visited by Irish households in Quarter 3 of 2021, with 32 per cent of households visiting most days and a further 34 per cent visiting most weeks. The figure was higher for urban households with 74 per cent visiting most weeks. Fields, farms and countryside, and woodland or forest areas were each visited by 31 per cent of households most weeks (CSO, 2021). At a European level, data from the European Environment Agency on urban green spaces places Dublin in the bottom half of EEA countries in terms of total green infrastructure; second for urban green space; and the bottom third for urban tree cover (EEA, 2022). While the data presents a positive picture, due to lack of comparable data, this indicator is coded white.

As noted above, the rate of people with at least two people they can rely on was 77 per cent in 2019. This indicator is also coded green here based on an indicator in the OECD Better Life Index which measures the proportion of people who believe they can rely on their friends in case of need where Ireland (96 per cent) ranks joint third with Finland and Norway behind Iceland and the Czech Republic.

Overall, this dimension is coded white.

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[21] www.tilda.tcd.ie

Civic Engagement, Trust, and Cultural Expression

The indicators with the highest weighted ranking under this dimension were: Trust in National Government; Satisfaction with how democracy works in Ireland; and Voter turn-out in National Elections.

As referenced above, the proportions of the population who responded positively to the questions "How much trust do you have in the national Government / national Parliament?" asked on behalf of the European Commission as part of the Standard Eurobarometer in Summer 2022 were 46 and 49 per cent respectively, compared to 49 per cent who tended not (European Commission, 2022). European comparison is also available within this dataset. Ireland (at 46 per cent) ranks comparatively highly (8th) and is 12pps ahead of the EU-27 average in terms of trusting national Government, and ranks 9th in terms of trusting the national Parliament, 10pps above the EU-27 average. This indicator is coded green.

As also stated above, the proportion of people who stated that they were satisfied with how democracy works in Ireland was 76 per cent in Spring 2021, which was fifth highest in Europe. This indicator is coded white due to lack of comparable data.

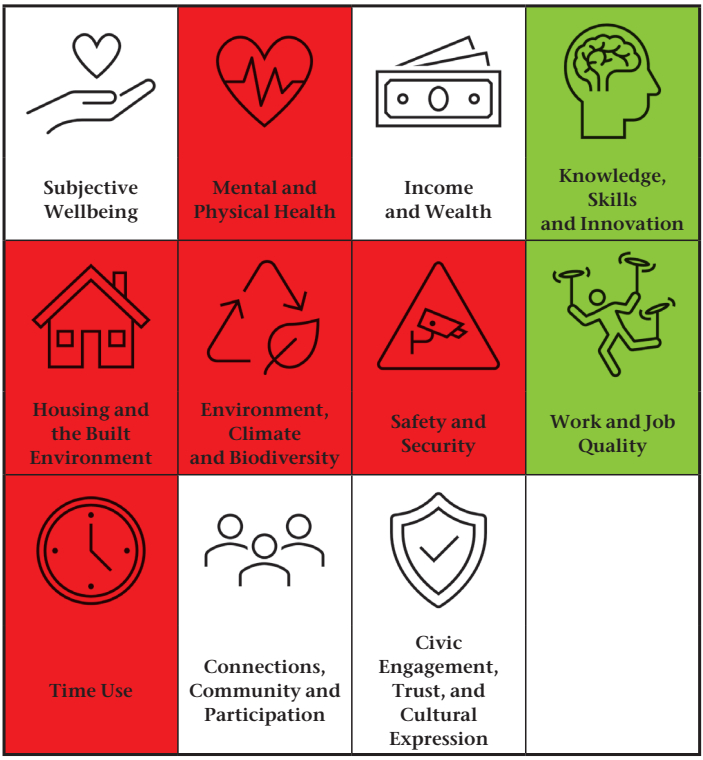
Voter turnout for General Election 2020 was 62.9 per cent. This is a decrease of 2.2pps on General Election 2016 (Oireachtas Library and Research Service, 2020). This indicator is coded red.

Overall, this dimension is coded white.

Alternative Dashboard

Once all of the data is coded, the alternative Well-being Dashboard indicates that there is considerable room for improvement if the Vision and Goals are to be achieved. Just two dimensions showed positive progress – Knowledge, Skills and Innovation; and Work and Job Quality, while four showed neutral progress – Subjective Wellbeing; Income and Wealth; Connections, Community and Participation; and Civic Engagement, Trust, and Cultural Expression; and the remaining five showed negative progress (Figure 2).

Figure 2: *Social Justice Ireland* Alternative Well-being Dashboard



The Well-being Framework and the Social Contract

Social Justice Ireland has consistently proposed a policy framework for a new Social Contract that identifies five key policy outcomes: a Vibrant Economy; Decent Services and Infrastructure; Just Taxation; Good Governance; and Sustainability (Bennett, Healy, Murphy, & Murphy, 2020). Each of these five key policy outcomes must be achieved if a new Social Contract is to be achieved. It is not enough to have three or even four of the five, while neglecting other areas. All five must be worked on simultaneously. It is not a question of getting the economy right and everything else will follow. That approach has led us from boom to bust to boom to bust. However, when we look at the wellbeing dimensions in the context of the Social Contract Framework, we see that is happening again (Figure 3). The two dimensions on which positive progress have been made relate to the economy.

If Government is serious about its commitment to the Well-being Framework and to ensuring policies that support a social contract, it must strive for progress across all five pillars.

Figure 3: Well-being Framework and the Social Contract

Vibrant Economy	Decent Services and Infrastructure	Just Taxation	Good Governance	Sustainability
 Work and Job Quality	 Subjective Wellbeing	 Income and Wealth	 Safety and Security	 Environment, Climate and Biodiversity
 Knowledge, Skills and Innovation	 Mental and Physical Health		 Civic Engagement, Trust, and Cultural Expression	 Time Use
	 Housing and the Built Environment			
	 Connections, Community and Participation			

Counting What Counts

The Wellbeing Framework presents an opportunity for policymakers. Done well, the Framework has the capacity to build-in a series of checks and balances in the development of policies which ensure that they look beyond economic metrics to meet the stated Overarching Vision and Goals. Measuring progress toward these Vision and Goals is critical to the success of the Wellbeing Framework. Such measurement must be meaningful and take a stakeholder approach to ensure that no one, but particularly the most marginalised, is left behind.

Social Justice Ireland therefore calls on Government to establish a Working Group, consisting of representatives from Government and State agencies; Local Government; Employers; Environmental Groups; Trade Unions; Farmers; and the Community and Voluntary Sector to keep the indicators under review to ensure that they are fit for purpose and providing an accurate, and comprehensive, picture of Ireland's progress on Wellbeing.

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What is the purpose of economic growth? To create more jobs? To increase the total tax-take? To make as many people as possible rich? To eradicate poverty and inequality? To make housing, healthcare, education and transport available to all? Ireland is a wealthy country and yet:

- **595,000 people live in poverty in Ireland, 93,000 of whom are employed, 160,000 are children**
- **120,443 are waiting for outpatient treatment for more than 18 months**
- **122,000 households comprising 260,000 people have an ongoing social housing need**
- **100s of special-needs children are unable to access school places with another 4,000 children waiting for a initial eligibility assessment in order to qualify for education supports.**

As we shift away from using GDP and similar indicators of economic activity, which do not take account of the damage done by some industries or practices as a measure of a successful nation and move towards measuring our wellbeing, policy must concern itself with enabling everyone to live fulfilled lives now and into the future.

The chapters in this book, were first presented at a policy conference on the topic of 'Towards Wellbeing for All' organised by Social Justice Ireland.

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